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BALZAC.

VOL. I.

THE CAT AND BATTLEDORE.

THE VENDETTA.

LONDON:
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THE

CAT AND BATTLEDORE,

And Other Tales.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

THE CAT AND BATTLEDORE. THE VENDETTA.

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PREFACE TO THE COMÉDIE HUMAINE.

In giving the title "Comédie Humaine" to a work begun nearly thirteen years ago, it is incumbent on me to set forth the leading idea of it, to account for its origin and briefly explain its plan; and to do this as if I had no personal interest at stake. This is not so difficult as the public may suppose. The production of a few works begets much vanity; the production of many, infinite modesty—an observation which accounts for the critical examination which Corneille, Molière, and other great authors bestowed upon their own works. If I cannot rival their beautiful conceptions, I may at least be allowed to share their feelings upon this point. The fundamental idea of the "Comédie Humaine" was to me at starting, as it were a dream, one of those impracticable projects which we

caress for a moment, then suffer to escape on airy wings; a chimera which smiles, reveals its woman's face, then straight upon a thought unfolds its pinions and mounts to some ideal heaven. But this chimera, like many a chimera, becomes metamorphosed into a reality; it commands, it tyrannizes, and we perforce submit.

The idea of which I am speaking arose from a comparison between man and the rest of the animal creation.

It would be a mistake to imagine that the great controversy which latterly arose between Cuvier and Geoffroi de St. Hilaire was based upon some scientific innovation. *Uniformity of Structure* had under other names engaged the attention of the master spirits of the two preceding centuries. On reperusing the very remarkable works of the mystic writers who have busied themselves about the sciences in their relations to the Infinite (such writers as Swedenborg, St. Martin, &c.), and the works of the most gifted students of natural history, such as Leibnitz, Buffon, Charles Bonnet, and others, we discover in the monads of Leibnitz, in the organic

molecules of Buffon, in the vegetative force of Needham, in the adaptation of resembling parts of Charles Bonnet (who had the courage to write so far back as the year 1760, "animals vegetate like plants"), we discover, I say, the rudiments of the beautiful law of "each for itself" on which the doctrine of *Uniformity of Structure* is based. There is but one animal. The Creator employed one and the same pattern for all organic beings. The animal is a principle which derives its external form, or to speak more precisely, its divergent forms, from the media in which it is called upon to develope itself. The species of zoology are the results of these differences. To have proclaimed and supported this system, a system which harmonizes with the ideas which we entertain of the divine power, will be the eternal honour of Geoffroi de St. Hilaire, who upon this high scientific question gained a victory over Cuvier—a victory hailed by the great Goethe in the last article which he wrote. Deeply imbued with this system, long ere the discussions which sprang out of it had arisen, I observed that in this respect social

life resembled nature. Does not society mould the human being according to the sphere in which he is called upon to act into as many different sorts of men as there are varieties in zoology? The differences which exist between the soldier, the artisan, the public functionary, the advocate, the man of independent means, the scientific man, the statesman, the merchant, the sailor, the poet, the beggar, the priest, are as considerable as, though more difficult to seize than, those which distinguish the lion, the ass, the raven, the shark, the seal, the sheep, &c., &c. Social species then, like zoological species, always have existed and always will exist. Now, if Buffon has produced a magnificent work in attempting to embrace zoology in its totality in one volume, was it not possible to produce a work of the same kind in relation to society? But in regard to the varieties of animals, nature has prescribed certain limits which do not affect the body social. When Buffon had described the lion he dismissed the lioness in a few phrases; whereas in the social world the wife is not always the female of the male.

There may be two altogether dissimilar beings in one and the same household. The wife of a shopkeeper is sometimes fit to be the wife of a prince, and it often happens that the wife of a prince is inferior to the wife of an artisan. The social state admits accidents which nature excludes—for society is nature, plus society. The description of the social species therefore, complicated by difference of sex only, was a task at least twice as great as the description of the species of animals. And finally, among animals there is but little dramatic action, little confusion; they attack each other and that is all. Men also attack each other, but the inequality between the intellectual powers of the combatants adds another complication to the combat. If some scientific men do not as yet admit that humanity is animality plus an immense torrent of vitality, it is certain that the grocer becomes a peer of France, while the nobleman sometimes sinks to the bottom of the social scale. Then again, Buffon found that existence among animals is simple in the extreme. The animal has but very little furniture, arts and sciences it has none;

whereas man, in obedience to some undiscovered law, has a tendency to embody his habits, his ideas, and his existence in everything which he appropriates to his needs. Although Leuwenhoëc, Swammerdam, Spallanzani, Réaumur, Charles Bonnet, Muller, Haller, and other painstaking zoographists have shown how interesting are the habits of animals, yet the habits of each animal are, to our eyes at least, constantly alike from age to age; whereas the habits, garments, language, and dwellings of the prince, the banker, the artist, the shopkeeper, the priest, and the pauper, are entirely different and change as civilization changes.

Thus the work to be undertaken was necessarily threefold. I had to deal with men, with women, and with things; that is to say, with persons and the material surroundings in which they clothe their ideas; in short with man and life.

Who, while reading the dry and repulsive catalogues of facts which are called histories, who has failed to discern that writers of every age in Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome have forgotten to give us a history of manners and customs?

The fragment of Petronius upon the private life of the Romans rather excites than gratifies our curiosity. Having noticed this immense gap in the field of history, the Abbé Barthélemy in the Anacharsis devoted his life to the reconstruction of the manners and customs of the Greeks.

But how was I to give interest to the drama, which a given society presents—a drama with three or four thousand characters? How please at once the poet, the philosopher, and the masses who love to have poetry and philosophy presented to them in striking forms? If I grasped the importance and the romance of this history of the human heart, I did not perceive any means of executing my design; for up to our time the most celebrated story-tellers had devoted all their talents to the creation of one or two typical personages; to the depiction of one phase of life. It was under this impression that I read the works of Walter Scott. Walter Scott, that troubadour of modern times, was then giving an immense impetus to a kind of composition which has been unjustly dubbed secondary. Is it not in

truth more difficult to compete with Daphnis and Chloë, Roland, Amadis, Panurge, Don Quixote, Manon Lescaut, Clarissa, Lovelace, Robinson Crusoe, Gil Blas, Ossian, Julie D'Etanges, Uncle Toby, Werther, René, Corinne, Adolphe, Paul and Virginia, Jeannie Deans, Claverhouse, Ivanhoe, Manfred, and Mignon, than to arrange facts which are nearly the same in all nations, to search for the spirit of obsolete laws, to methodize theories which bewilder peoples, or, like certain metaphysicians, to explain that which is? In the first place, it almost invariably happens that such characters as I have enumerated (whose existence is more durable and more tangible than the generation amid which they are placed by their creators), owe their vitality to the fact that they are on a large scale an image of the present. Such characters, bred in the bowels of their epoch, form an envelope beneath which beats the great heart of humanity. A whole system of philosophy often lies hid beneath such characters. Walter Scott, then, conferred the philosophic value of history upon the novel—that field of

literature which from age to age yields imperishable diamonds to encrust the poetic crown of those lands which foster letters. Scott infused into his novels the spirit of the past; blended in them action and dialogue, portrait, landscape, and description; he introduced into them the marvellous and the true, those elements of the age which he depicts; and on his page the language of poetry is found side by side with the homeliest dialects. But Scott having discovered his method in the heat of his labour, or through the logic of his labour, rather than preconceived a system, it did not occur to him to unite his compositions one to another, so as to co-ordinate a complete history, each chapter of which would have been a romance, and each romance an epoch. Observing this absence of combination, which, however, does not diminish the greatness of our Scotsman, I at once perceived the system which was favourable to the execution of my work and the possibility of executing it. Although I was dazzled, so to speak, by the astonishing fecundity of Walter Scott, ever equal and

ever original, I did not despair; for I discovered the source of this gift in the infinite variety of human nature. Chance is the greatest novelist in the world; he who would be fertile has but to study. French society was to be the historian; I was to be only its secretary. By making an inventory of vices and virtues; by collecting the principal actions of the passions, by the painting of character, by selecting the chief social events, and by composing types through the combination of several homogeneous characters, it occurred to me that I might possibly accomplish the writing of that history which so many historians have ignored—the history of manners and customs. By dint of great patience and courage I might realize for nineteenth-century France that volume which to our universal regret Rome, Athens, Tyre, Memphis, Persia, and India, have failed to bequeath to us, touching their respective civilizations—a volume which the brave and patient Monteil, following in the footsteps of the Abbé Barthélemy, attempted, though in an unattractive form, on behalf of the Middle Ages.

But such a work would still be a mere trifle. A writer, confining himself rigorously to a mere reproduction of society, might prove himself a painter, more or less faithful, more or less fortunate, patient and courageous, of types of humanity; a narrator of dramas of private life, an archæologist of the furniture of society, a nomenclator of the professions, a registrar of good and of evil. But in order to earn that praise to which every artist should aspire, was I not bound to study the cause or causes of these social effects, to seize the meaning that underlay this vast assemblage of persons, passions, and events? Lastly, after having sought (I don't say discovered) this cause, this social lever, was I not bound to meditate on natural principles and observe in what respects societies depart from or approximate to the eternal rule of the true and the beautiful? In spite of the extent of the premises, which premises alone would form a work, my work, to be complete, required a conclusion. Thus depicted, society should carry with it the reason of its movement.

The distinguishing characteristic of the

author, that which makes him an author, which renders him the peer if not the superior of the statesman, is a definite conclusion about human affairs, an absolute devotion to certain principles. Machiavelli, Hobbes, Bossuet, Leibnitz, Kant, Montesquieu *are* the science which statesmen *apply*. "An author," said Bonald, "ought to have fixed opinions in morals and politics; he should look upon himself as an instructor of men, for men don't want masters to teach them to doubt." I took betimes those grand words as my guide; they are the code of the monarchical writer. Accordingly when it is attempted to make me contradict myself, it will be found that some ironical expression has been misinterpreted; or perchance that by a manœuvre familiar to calumniators, an expression of one of my characters has been improperly turned against myself. As for the hidden meaning—the soul of this work—the principles on which it rests are these:—

Man is neither good nor bad, he is born with certain instincts and aptitudes. Social intercourse, far from degrading him,

as Rousseau has contended, tends to perfect man and improve him; but private interest developes his evil proclivities also. Christianity, Catholicism especially, being, as I have said in the Médecin de Campagne, a complete system for the repression of the depraved tendencies of man, is the greatest element of social order.

From an attentive study of the picture of society, drawn, so to speak, from life, with all its good and all its evil, we derive this lesson, that if thought or passion, which embraces both thought and feeling, is the social element; it is also the destructive social element. In this respect social life resembles natural life. It is only by moderating the social activity of a people that we can ensure its longevity. Instruction, then, or rather education by religious bodies, is the grand principle of existence for nations, the sole means of diminishing the sum of evil and augmenting the sum of bliss in every society. Thought, that principle of good and evil, can be prepared, restrained, directed only by religion. The only religion possible is Christianity. (See the letter written from Paris in Louis Lambert, a letter in

which the youthful mystic philosopher explains in relation to the Swedenborgian doctrine, how there has been but one religion from the beginning of the world.)

Christianity has created and will preserve the peoples of modern times. Hence, doubtless, the necessity of the monarchic principle. Catholicism and monarchy are two twin principles. As to the limits within which these two principles should be confined by institutions, in order that they may not become absolutely paramount, every one will understand that a preface so succinct as this needs must be, cannot be made a political treatise. Thus I am precluded from entering upon the religious and political discussions of the day. I write by the light of two eternal truths—religion and monarchy, two necessities, shown to be such by contemporary events, necessities to which every writer endowed with good sense should endeavour to reconduct his country. I am no enemy of the representative system; it is an excellent principle, on which to base the laws, but I reject it when put forward as the only social means, and especially in its pre-

sent badly organized condition; for it fails to represent imposing minorities whose ideas and interests it is the duty of a monarchical government to consider. The representative system universally extended hands us over to the rule of the masses, the only rule which is irresponsible, the only rule whose tyranny is boundless, for it is called *the law*. I must add that I look upon the family, not the individual, as the real social unit. In this respect, at the risk of being deemed a retrograde intellect, I take my stand with Bossuet and Bonald, instead of joining recent innovators.

Since the representative system has become the only social means, it must not be inferred, should I resort to it myself, that there is the least divergence between my opinions and my actions. An engineer announces that a certain bridge is on the point of giving way, that it is perilous for any one to make use of it, yet uses it himself when it forms the only route by which he can reach the town. Napoleon had wonderfully adapted the representative system to the genius of our country; and

accordingly the most insignificant deputies of his Legislative Body were the most celebrated orators of the Chambers under the Restoration. No Chamber has equalled the Legislative Body, if we take them man for man. The imperial elective system is therefore incontestably the best.

Certain persons may discover something arrogant and presumptuous in this manifesto. The novelist will be attacked for wishing to be a historian, and will be asked to explain his politics. In saying what I have said, I fulfilled an obligation. That is my only answer. The task which I have undertaken will be as long as a history. I was bound to set forth its rationale, hitherto unknown, its principles and its morality.

Compelled as I have been to suppress prefaces published in answer to criticism essentially fugitive—I desire to retain only one observation.

Writers who have in view an object, be it only a return to principles, which, from the mere fact of their being eternal, are to be met with in the past, must always

begin by clearing the ground. Now, whoever carries his stone into the domain of ideas, whoever points out an abuse, whoever places a stigma upon that which is bad, with a view to its abolition, is always looked upon as immoral. The reproach of immorality, which the courageous writer has never escaped, is moreover the last that remains to be made when nothing else can be objected to a poet. If your pictures are true, if, by dint of diurnal and nocturnal toil, you succeed in writing the most difficult language in the world, the word immorality is flung in your face. Socrates was immoral, Jesus Christ was immoral. Both were prosecuted in the name of the societies which they overturned or reformed. When you wish to kill any one, tax him with immorality. This, the familiar device of partisans, is the disgrace of all who have recourse to it. Luther and Calvin knew well what they were about when they availed themselves of injured material interests as a shield, and so they lived to the term of their natural lives. It happened, and must necessarily have happened, that in copying a whole

society, embracing the vast field of its various activities, some particular composition exhibited more evil than good, some particular portion of the fresco displayed a group of culprits. Thereupon the critics set up the yell of immorality, without pointing out some other part which was intended to form a complete contrast. Since the critics were ignorant of the general scheme, I forgave them; and I forgave them all the more readily, because it is quite as impossible to stop criticism as it is to prevent the eye, the tongue, and the judgment from performing their functions. Besides, the era of impartiality has not yet arrived for me, and moreover an author who cannot make up his mind to stand the fire of criticism, should no more sit down to write than a traveller should set forth upon a journey trusting to a continuance of fine weather. Upon this question of morality it remains for me to point out that the most conscientious moralists doubt whether society exhibits as many good as evil actions, and that in my picture of it will be found a greater number of virtuous than of blameworthy

characters. In my pages, unworthy actions, faults, crimes, from the lightest to the gravest, meet with their retribution, human or divine, open or concealed. I have done better than the historian; for I am less fettered. Cromwell incurred no other chastisement on earth, than that inflicted on him by the thinker. Even up till now the question has been discussed between the different schools. Bossuet himself spared the illustrious regicide. William of Orange the ursurper, Hugh Capet, that other usurper, die full of days without having any more distrust or fear than Henry the Fourth and Charles the First. The life of Catherine the Second and that of Frederick of Prussia, would point to the conclusion that there is no such thing as morality, when they are judged either by the moral code which governs private persons, or that which rules crowned heads—for there is, as Napoleon has said, for kings and statesmen, a minor and a major code of morals. My scenes of political life are based upon that fine reflection. It is not the essence of history, as it is of the novel, to aim at the beau ideal. History is or ought to be that

which has happened, while, according to Madame Necker, one of the most distinguished spirits of the last century, "the romance should be the better world." But the romance would be nothing if the august falsehood were not true in its details. Walter Scott, being compelled to conform to the notions of a country essentially hypocritical, was false relatively to human nature at large in his portraiture of woman, because his models were schismatics. The Protestant woman has no ideal. She may be chaste, pure, virtuous, but her unexpansive love will always be calm and subdued, like an accomplished duty. It would seem that the Virgin Mary has chilled the hearts of the sophists who banished her from Heaven with her treasures of mercy. In the Protestant scheme the fallen woman has no possibilities, whereas in the Catholic Church the hope of pardon renders her sublime. Accordingly for the Protestant writer there is but one woman, while the Catholic writer discovers in each fresh situation a fresh one. Had Walter Scott been a Catholic; had he set himself the task of truthfully delineating the various societies which

succeeded each other in Scotland, it is possible that the portrayer of Effie and of Alice (the two characters whom, in his old age, he reproached himself for delineating) would have recognized the passions with their errors and their chastisements, and the virtues which penitence points out to them. Passion is human nature in its entirety; without passion, religion, history, romance, and art would be useless. Seeing me pile up so many facts, and describe them as they are, with passion for their element some persons have imagined, most erroneously, that I belonged to the school of sensualism and materialism, two aspects of the same fact, namely, pantheism. But perhaps it was natural, nay, necessary, that they should make this mistake. I do not share the belief in the indefinite progress of society. I believe in the improvement of the individual man. Those, then, who would discern in me any intention to regard man as a finite creature are strangely mistaken. Seraphita, the doctrine (in action) of the Christian Buddha, seems to me to be a sufficient answer to this accusation, which has been very lightly brought against me.

In certain fragments of this long work, I have tried to popularize the astounding facts (I may say prodigies) of electricity, which in the human subject becomes converted into an incalculable force; but how can the phenomena of brain and nerve, which prove the existence of a new moral world, disturb the certain and necessary relations between the worlds and God? How will the dogmas of the Catholic faith be shaken by these phenomena? If by dint of incontestable facts, thought is some day classed among the fluids which are revealed only through their effects, and whose substance escapes our senses, even fortified as they are by so many mechanical appliances, it will be with this discovery, as it was with the sphericity of the earth observed by Christopher Columbus, and its rotation proved by Galileo. Our future will remain the same. Animal magnetism, with whose miracles I have been familiar since 1820; the beautiful researches of Gall, the successor of Lavater; all those who, during the last fifty years, have devoted their labours to thought, as opticians have devoted theirs to Light

(Thought and Light being closely akin) support the mystics, those disciples of the apostle St. John, and the great thinkers who have proved the existence of the spiritual world, that sphere wherein the relations betwixt man and God are laid bare.

Those who thoroughly grasp the meaning of this work will discover that I attribute as much importance to constant everyday facts (secret or patent),—to the actions of the individual life, to their causes and their principles, as historians have hitherto accorded to the events of the public life of nations. The secret combat which takes place between Madame de Mortsauf and her passion, in a valley of the Indre, is perhaps as grand as the most celebrated of recorded battles (see the Lily in the Valley). In the latter the glory of some conqueror is at stake, in the other the stake is Heaven. The misfortunes of Birotteau the priest, and Birotteau the perfumer, are, to my mind, the sufferings of humanity. La Fosseuse (in the Country Doctor) and Madame Graslin in the Village Parson, are woman in her entirety well-nigh. 'Tis thus we suffer day by day.

I have been called upon to do a hundred times that which Richardson did but once. Lovelace has a thousand shapes; for social depravity assumes the hues of all the surroundings amid which it is developed. On the other hand, Clarissa, that beautiful image of impassioned virtue, is depicted in lines whose purity fills one with despair. To produce many Madonnas one must be a Raphael. In this respect literature is perhaps inferior to painting. And here I may perhaps be permitted to point out how many spotless characters are to be found in the published portions of this work. There are Pierrette Lorraine, Ursule Mirouët, Constance Birotteau, La Fosseuse, Eugénie Grandet, Marguerite Claës, Pauline de Villenoix, Madame Jules, Madame de la Chanterie, Eve Chardon, Mademoiselle d'Esgrignon, Madame Firmiani, Agatha Rouget, Renée de Maucombe, and many secondary characters which, though they don't stand out in such bold relief, do, none the less, present to the reader an example of the practice of the domestic virtues. Do not Joseph Lebas, Genestas, Benassis, Parson Bonnet, Doctor

Minoret, Pillerault, David Séchard, the two Birotteaus, Parson Chaperon, Justice Popinot, Bourgeat, the Sauviats, the Taschcrons, and many others, furnish a solution of the difficult literary problem which consists in rendering virtue interesting. It was no light task to paint the two or three thousand prominent characters of an epoch; for such in fact is the number of types which each generation furnishes and the Comédie Humaine embraces. This crowd of characters and dispositions, this multitude of existencies needed frames and, if the expression may be allowed to pass, galleries. Hence the very natural and now well-known division of my work into Scenes of Private, Provincial, Parisian, Political, Military, and Country Life. In these six books are included all the studies of manners and customs which form the general history of society, the collection of all its acta et gesta, as our ancestors would have said. These six books correspond, moreover, to leading ideas. Each of them has its meaning and significance; each formulates an epoch of human life. I will here repeat succinctly what Felix

Davin, a young man of talent lost to the literary world through premature death, wrote, after having informed himself as to my plan. The Scenes of Private Life represent infancy and youth with their errors, just as the Scenes of Provincial Life represent a period of life when passion, calculation, interest, and ambition, are in full play. Then the Scenes of Parisian Life present a picture of the tastes, the vices, and all the unbridled licence born of the modes of life peculiar to a metropolis where the extremes of good and evil meet upon common ground. Each of these three divisions has its local colouring. Paris and the provinces, that social antithesis, have furnished their immense resources. Not men only, but the principal events of life are formulated by types. There are certain situations which occur in every existence, typical phases, and, in this respect, I have specially endeavoured to be accurate. I have attempted to give an idea of the different districts of our beautiful country. My work has its geography as it has its genealogy and its families, its localities, things, persons, and

events; as it has its heraldry, its nobility, its middle-classes, artisans, and peasants, its politicians, its dandies, its army; in short its world. After having in those three books described social life, it remained to paint such exceptional existences as involve the interests of several or of all, existences which are, in some sort, outside the general rule. Hence the Scenes of Political Life. This vast picture of society having been finished and completed, was it not necessary to exhibit it in its most agitated state, carried out of itself for purposes either of defence or conquest? Hence the Scenes of Military Life, which are, as yet, the least perfect portion of my work; but for which a place will be left in this edition in order that when completed they may form an integral part of it. Lastly, the Scenes of Country Life are in some sort the evening of this long day, if I may be allowed to give that name to the drama of society. In this last book will be found the purest characters, together with the application of the great principles of order, politics, and morality.

Such (crowded with characters, teeming

with serious and comic action) is the base on which the Philosophical Studies, the second portion of the work, are founded. Here the active social element of all the varied effects, is laid bare and the ravages of thought are depicted, sentiment by sentiment, while the first volume the "Peau de Chagrin," unites the studies of men and manners to the philosophical studies by a link of almost oriental fancy. Here life itself is portrayed struggling with the principle of all passion. Above this will be found the analytical studies of which I will say nothing, since only one of them, the Physiology of Marriage, has been published. After the lapse of a certain time I must produce two other works of this kind; first, the Pathology of Social Life, then the Anatomy of Educational Bodies and the Monograph of Virtue.

Perhaps those who perceive how much remains for me to do will say what my publishers have said, "God grant you life." My only aspiration is that I may not be so harassed by men and circumstances as I have been since I entered upon this fearful labour. Thus much, thank God, I

have had in my favour; not only the most talented spirits of the age, the noblest characters, but sincere friends also, as great in private as the former are in public life, have pressed my hand and whispered "Courage." And why should I not confess that these friendships and sundry tokens of esteem which strangers have from time to time bestowed on me, have sustained me in my career both against myself and against attacks; against the calumny which has so often dogged my steps, against despair, and against that over-ardent hope whose language is apt to be mistaken for that of overweening self-esteem. I had made up my mind to meet attacks and insults with stoical impassiveness; but on two occasions base slander has driven me to self-defence. If those who advocate forgiveness of injuries regret that I have displayed my skill in literary fence, several Christians are of opinion that we live in an age in which it is well to prove that silence has its generosity. The vast extent of a plan which embraces at once a history and a criticism of society, an analysis of its evils, and a discussion of

its first principles, justifies me, I believe, in giving to my work the title under which it appears to-day, namely, The Drama of Human Life. Is it an ambitious title? Is it not a proper title? That is the question which, when the work is finished, the public will decide.

LA MAISON DU CHAT QUI PELOTE.

DEDICATED TO MADEMOISELLE MARIE DE MONTHEAU.

In the middle of the Rue St. Denis almost at the corner of the Rue du Petit Lion, there formerly stood one of those precious houses which render it easy for the historian, with the aid of analogy, to reproduce old Paris. The menacing walls of the rickety old building seemed to have been spattered with hieroglyphics, for hieroglyphics is the only word that the watchful idler could apply to the X's and V's traced upon the façade by the horizontal or diagonal pieces of wood whose course was marked in the whitewash by small parallel chinks. It was obvious that the passage of the lightest vehicle would cause every one of these beams to tremble in its socket. The venerable building was surmounted by a triangular roof of a kind of which very soon not a single example will be left in

Paris. This roof, stained by the inclemency of a Parisian atmosphere, overhung the street to a distance of three feet, as much for the purpose of protecting the doorstep from rain-water, as for affording cover to the wall of an attic with its sill-less window. This last storey was built of planks nailed one upon the other, like scales; in order, doubtless, not to over-weight the frail erection.

On a rainy morning in the month of March, a young man carefully wrapped in his mantle, was stationed under the penthouse of a shop opposite to the old dwelling, which he was scrutinizing with all the enthusiasm of an archæologist. In truth this relic of the bourgeoisie of the sixteenth century, supplied the observer with more than one problem for solution. Each storey had its peculiarity; in the first there were four long narrow windows, closely packed, and having their lower portions filled with wooden squares with the object of producing that treacherous light, by whose aid a skilful shopkeeper lends to his articles the particular shade desired by his customers. The young man

seemed to entertain a profound contempt for this very necessary part of the house; his eyes did not rest there, even for a moment. The windows of the second storey—whose blinds were raised so as to display through their large panes of Bohemian glass, the small curtains of red muslin—did not excite in him any deeper interest. His attention was particularly directed to the third storey, to some humble windows whose roughly finished wooden frames would have deserved a place in the School of Arts and Manufactures, as a sample of the earliest French joining. These windows were glazed with little panes, so green that, but for his excellent sight, the young man could not have seen the calico curtains with their blue squares which concealed from the eyes of the profane the mysteries of the apartment. At times our watcher, wearied by his fruitless observation, or by the silence in which the house and the whole neighbourhood were buried, bent his gaze upon the lower parts of the house. An involuntary smile then formed itself upon his lips, as the shop, with its amalgamation of ridiculous objects once

more met his gaze. A formidable piece of wood laid horizontally upon four pillars, which seemed to be bowed by the weight of the decrepid dwelling, had been retouched with as many coats of different colours as the cheek of any old duchess with layers of rouge. In the centre of this large beam, which was delicately carved, was to be seen an old picture representing THE CAT.

It was this picture that excited the amusement of the young man. But we must admit that the cleverest of modern painters could not invent so comical a caricature. The animal held in one of its front paws a racket, as big as itself, and was raising itself upon its hind paws, to take aim at an enormous ball thrown back to it by a gentleman in an embroidered coat. Design, colour, accessories and all were treated in such a manner as to give rise to the idea that the artist's intention was to make game of shopkeeper and passer-by. Time, by changing the appearance of this primitive picture, had rendered it still more grotesque by introducing a certain vagueness which might disturb the conscientious idler. Thus the spotted tail of the cat was

so cut out that it might be taken for a looker-on; so big, so lofty, and so thick were the tails of our ancestors' cats. To the right of this picture, on an azure field, which only in part concealed the rottenness of the wood, the passer-by beheld the word *Guillaume*, and to the left *Successeur du Sieur Chevrel*. Sun and rain had destroyed the greater part of the gilt, which had been parsimoniously applied to the letters of this inscription, in which the *u's* stood for *v's*, and the *v's* for *u's* according to the laws of our ancient orthography. Here, with a view to taking down the pride of those who believe that the world grows cleverer from day to day, and that the charlatanism of modern times is unrivalled, it is fitting to point out, that these signs, whose etymology seems strange to many a Parisian shopkeeper, are the inanimate representations of living presentations, by aid of which our cunning ancestors had succeeded in attracting customers to their houses. Thus the Spinning Sow, the Green Monkey, &c., were caged animals whose skill surprised the passer-by, while their education demonstrated the patience of the tradesman

of the fifteenth century. Such curiosities enriched their fortunate owners more speedily than the Providences, the Good Faiths, the God's graces, and the decapitations of St. John the Baptist, which are still to be seen in the Rue St. Denis.

However, our young man was assuredly not standing there to admire the cat, which a moment's careful notice would grave in the memory. He also had his singularities. His mantle, folded like the drapery of an ancient statue, did not hide his well-made shoes, which were the more noticeable amid the mud of Paris, in that he wore white silk stockings, whose stains bore witness to his impatience. It was evident that he had just left some ball or wedding, for he held a pair of white gloves in his hand, and the disordered curls of his black hair lay scattered on his shoulders and displayed the Caracalla cut rendered fashionable by the school of the painter David, as well as by that passion for Greek and Roman fashions which marked the early years of this century. In spite of the noise made by certain market-gardeners, who set their horses at a gallop in order to

reach the central market betimes, the busy street was wrapped in that silence whose magic is known only to those who have wandered through the deserted city at those hours, when its clatter, for a moment stilled, begins again to break forth, and is heard in the distance, like the great murmur of the sea. This strange young man must have been as much an object of curiosity to the shop folks of the Chat-qui-pelote, as the Chat-qui-pelote was to him. A cravat of dazzling whiteness rendered his anxious face paler than in reality it was. The fire, now sombre, now sparkling, cast by his dark eyes, harmonized with the strange contours of his face, and with his large and many-folded mouth that narrowed when he smiled. His forehead now wrinkled by some acute disappointment, was stamped with some fatality. Is not the forehead the most prophetic part of the face? When the forehead of the stranger expressed passion, the furrows which it formed inspired a kind of terror by their vigorous development; yet when restored to that repose which was so readily disturbed, this forehead diffused around it a luminous grace

which lent a certain charm to a face in which joy and sorrow, love, anger, and disdain shone forth so contagiously that the coldest could not escape being impressed by it.

The stranger was in such a fretful mood at the moment when the attic window was hastily opened, that he did not perceive three gladsome faces pink and white—but commonplace as the figure-heads of Commerce to be found on certain monuments. These three faces, to which the dormer window formed a sort of frame, recalled the chubby faces of the cherubs scattered among the clouds that surround the *Père éternel*. The apprentices inhaled the exhalations of the street in a manner which proved how heated and mephitic was the atmosphere of their attic. After having pointed out the curious sentinel, the apprentice who seemed the most jovial of the three, disappeared and came back holding in his hand an instrument, whose unbending metal has recently been replaced by supple leather; then every face assumed a mischievous expression as they watched the loiterer whom they sprinkled with a fine

white spray, whose odour clearly showed that the three chins had just been shaved. Standing on tiptoe and ensconced in the back part of their attic, in order to enjoy the vexation of their victim, the three assistants ceased to laugh, when they observed the careless contempt with which the young man shook his mantle and the profound disdain depicted on the countenance which he raised to the empty window. At that moment a white and delicate hand raised the lower part of one of the rude windows of the third storey, by means of one of those slides the tourniquet of which frequently drops without a warning the heavy window which it should secure. Then was the passer rewarded for his lengthy watch. A young girl's face, as fresh as one of those white cups that emboss the bosom of the lake with flowers, appeared, crowned with a ruche of crumpled muslin that gave the head an air of admirable innocence. The neck and shoulders, though covered with some brown material, could yet be seen, thanks to some slight interstices produced by the slumberer's movements. There was no expression of constraint either in

the ingenuous face or in the calm eyes immortalized by anticipation in the sublime productions of Raphael. There were to be seen the selfsame grace, the selfsame tranquillity which have become proverbial. Charming was the contrast between the youthful cheek on which sleep had produced the appearance of overflowing life, and the antique massive window with its rough outlines and black sill. Like those flowers of the daytime which the morning finds with the still unfolded tunic which the chilly night has closed, the only half-awakened girl cast her blue eyes upon the neighbouring roofs and on the sky; but, in obedience to a kind of habit, they sank to the sombre regions of the street, and there at once encountered those of her adorer. Doubtless her vanity was wounded at being seen in such unfashionable garb. So she suddenly drew back, the well-worn tourniquet yielded, the window came down with that rapidity which has gained for this primitive invention of our ancestors an odious name, and the vision disappeared. To that young man the brightest of the

morning stars seemed to have been suddenly hidden by a cloud.

While these little events were in progress the heavy inside shutters which reinforced the fragile casement of the shop of the *Chat qui pelote* have been removed as if by magic. The old knockered door was folded back upon the interior wall of the house by a servant, seemingly contemporary with the sign, who with trembling hand fastened to the door the scrap of square cloth on which was embroidered in yellow silk the name *Guillaume, successeur de Chevrel.* More than one passer-by would have been puzzled to discover the nature of the business carried on by M. Guillaume. It was barely possible to distinguish through the thick iron bars which protected the exterior of the shop, the brown calico-covered parcels numerous as a shoal of herrings. Spite of the apparent simplicity of this Gothic front, M. Guillaume was of all Parisian linen-drapers the one whose warehouses were ever the best supplied, whose connexions were most widely spread, while his commercial integrity was beyond suspicion.

If any of his compeers entered into a government contract without having the requisite quantity of cloth, he was always ready to deliver it to them, however great might be the number of pieces tendered for. The wily merchant knew a thousand ways of securing for himself the greatest share of profit without being driven like them to cringe or offer rich bribes to powerful patrons. If his compeers could pay him only in sound but somewhat long-dated bills, he referred them to his notary as an accommodating person, and thus made a double profit, thanks to this expedient, which gave rise among the shopkeepers of the Rue St. Denis to the proverbial saying, "God preserve you from the notary of M. Guillaume," meaning a heavy discount.

The old shopkeeper was to be found, as if by miracle, at the door of his shop at the moment when the servant withdrew; he gazed upon the Rue St. Denis, the neighbouring shops and the sky, like a man who disembarking at Havre sees France once more after a long voyage.

Having satisfied himself that all was as it had been when he went to bed, he at

length perceived the sentinel stranger, who in his turn contemplated the patriarch of drapery much as Humboldt must have examined the first electric gymnote that he saw in America. M. Guillaume wore ample breeches of black velvet, stockings, and square-toed shoes with silver buckles. His slightly stooping figure was clothed with a square-lapped, square-tailed, square-collared coat of greenish cloth, whose large white metal buttons were somewhat tarnished by wear. His grey hairs were so scrupulously smoothed and combed, and flattened down upon his yellow skull, as to make it look like a field in furrows. His small green eyes, which looked as if they had been pierced with a gimblet, gleamed beneath two arches, on which a faint red mark supplied the place of brows. Care had traced upon his forehead straight furrows, numerous as the creases in his coat. His pale face spoke of patience, commercial prudence, and that species of cunning cupidity which business requires. At the period of which I am speaking those old families, wherein the manners and fashion of dress distinctive of their

calling, were preserved as precious traditions, were more frequently to be met with than now-a-days. There they were, in the midst of modern civilization, like relics of an antediluvian age, discovered in a quarry by some Cuvier. The head of the Guillaume family, was just one of these notable guardians of old customs. You would catch him regretting the provost of the shopkeepers, and whenever he spoke of a decision of the tribunal of commerce, he always called it the sentence of the consuls. The earliest riser, doubtless in accordance with those ancient customs, of his household, he was awaiting with firm foot the advent of his clerks, ready to scold them in case of their being late. Those young disciples of Mercury knew of nothing so much to be dreaded as the silent activity with which their chief examined their faces and their movements on Monday morning, with an eye to the discovery of proofs and traces of their escapades. But at the present moment the old draper was not paying any attention whatever to his apprentices; he was busy in discovering the motive of the anxiety which the young

man in the mantle and silk stockings displayed by gazing first at the sign and then into the depths of the shop.

It was now much lighter, and the desk with its iron grill and curtains of old green silk, the desk which held the ponderous books, mute oracles of the house, was now visible. The too inquiring stranger seemed to covet that little spot, and thence to take a plan of a lateral dining-room lighted by a window in the ceiling and affording the family during meal-time a ready view of the slightest incidents which might take place at the door of the shop. So great a passion for his abode seemed suspicious to a shopkeeper who had undergone the Maximum of 1793. It therefore very naturally occurred to M. Guillaume that that sinister countenance boded an attack upon the strong box of the Chat-qui-pelote. After having discreetly enjoyed the mute duel which took place between his employer and the stranger, the eldest of the clerks, seeing the young man cast a furtive glance at the windows of the third storey, ventured to place himself on the floor of the shop beside M. Guillaume. Then taking

two steps into the street, the clerk looked up, and fancied he saw Mademoiselle Augustine Guillaume hastily withdraw from the window. Not relishing the perspicacity of his chief clerk, the draper cast a side-glance at him, but all at once the mutual fears which the stranger's presence aroused in the mind of the shopkeeper and the enamoured clerk were soothed. The stranger hailed a cab which was driving to some neighbouring stand, and quickly took his seat with an air of deceptive indifference. His departure was not without its calming effects upon the minds of the other clerks, who were far from easy, when on coming downstairs they found the victim of their practical joke still on the spot.

"Well, gentlemen, what do you mean by sticking there with your arms folded?" said M. Guillaume to his three neophytes. "Why formerly, by Jove, when I was clerk to M. Chevrel I should have examined two pieces of cloth by this time."

"The sun must have risen earlier then," said the second clerk, on whom this duty

devolved. The old shopkeeper could not forbear from smiling.

Although two of these three young men who had been confided to his care by their fathers, who were wealthy manufacturers at Louviers and Sedan, had nothing to do but to ask and have four thousand pounds so soon as they should be old enough to start upon their own account, Guillaume deemed it his duty to keep them under the ferule of an antique despotism quite unknown in our day, in the gay shops of modern times, whose clerks want to be rich at thirty. Guillaume made his clerks work like slaves. Between the three of them they sufficed for all the demands of a business which would have tried the metal of ten of those assistants whose luxurious tastes swell the columns of the budgets of to-day.

No noise disturbed the peace of the staid old house, in which the hinges seemed to be always oiled, and every piece of furniture, even the most trifling, showed that admirable neatness which bespeaks the severest order and economy. Often and

often had the wag amused himself by inscribing on the gruyère which was left to the mercy of the clerks at luncheon, and which they made a joke of saving, the date of its original admission. This pleasantry and others of a similar character sometimes raised a smile upon the features of M. Guillaume's youngest daughter, the pretty maiden who had just disappeared from the gaze of the enchanted stranger. Although each of the apprentices, even the eldest, paid a handsome sum for board, not one of them would have been bold enough to remain at his patron's table when dessert made its appearance. When Madame Guillaume talked of dressing the salad, these poor young fellows shuddered as they thought of the parsimony displayed by her prudent hands in dispensing the oil. It would never have entered their heads to stay out all night without having given long beforehand a plausible excuse for such an irregularity. Every Sunday two of the clerks took it in turn to accompany the Guillaume family to mass at St. Leu and to vespers. Mademoiselle Virginie and Mademoiselle Augustine, chastely

attired in print, took each the arm of one of the clerks, and walked before under the penetrating eyes of their mother, who brought up the rear of this family procession, accompanied by her husband drilled into the duty of carrying two large prayer-books bound in black morocco. The second clerk had no salary. As for the one whom twelve years of perseverance and discretion had instructed in the secrets of the establishment, he received 32*l.* a year as compensation for his labours. On certain family high days and holidays he received certain presents (whose value consisted in the fact that they came through Madame Guillaume's dry and wrinkled hand); thread purses stuffed with cotton to exhibit the open work designs, braces, or a pair of silk stockings of the thickest kind. At times, though rarely, this first minister was allowed to share the diversions of the family, either excursions to the country, or when, after months of expectation, it was decided to exercise the right of commanding some long-forgotten piece, which taking a box confers. As for the other clerks, the

barrier of respect which formerly separated a master-draper from his apprentices was so firmly erected between them and the old shopkeeper, that it would have been easier for them to steal a piece of cloth, than to disturb that august etiquette. This reserve may appear ridiculous to-day; but for all that, these old-fashioned houses were schools of morality and integrity. The masters *adopted* their apprentices. A young man's linen was looked after, mended, sometimes renewed, by the mistress of the house. Did one of the apprentices fall ill? He became the object of a thoroughly maternal care. Was the illness dangerous? The master scattered his money about in fees to the most celebrated doctors; for he did not undertake to look after the morals and education only of the young folks. If one of them of honourable character, encountered some misfortune these old trades-people knew how to appreciate the intelligence which he had displayed, nor did they hesitate to entrust the happiness of their daughters to one to whom they had long entrusted their fortune. Guillaume was one of these men of

the olden times, and if he was not free from their absurdities, he possessed all their good qualities. Accordingly Joseph Lebas, his chief clerk, a portionless orphan, was in his ideal scheme, the future husband of Virginie, his eldest daughter. But Joseph did not share the symmetrical notions of his patron, who would not, for an empire, have married his second daughter before the first. The unhappy clerk felt that his heart was entirely wrapped up in Mademoiselle Augustine, the younger daughter. In order to justify this passion, which had secretly acquired strength, we must penetrate a little deeper into the springs of the absolute government that ruled the establishment of the old draper.

Guillaume had two daughters. The eldest, Mademoiselle Virginie, was the exact portrait of her mother. Madame Guillaume, the daughter of M. Chevrel, used to sit so upright upon the bench behind her counter, that she had more than once heard some wags bet that she was empaled there. Her long thin face showed signs of boundless sanctimoniousness. Ungraceful in person, unengaging in manner, Madame

Guillaume habitually adorned her head, which had weathered sixty winters, with a cap of inflexible design and trimmed with weepers like that of a widow. She was known to the whole neighbourhood as "the messenger nun." Her language was concise, and her gestures recalled the jerky movements of a telegraph. Her eye, clear as that of a cat, seemed to seek revenge from every one for its owner's ugliness. Mademoiselle Virginie, who, like her younger sister, had been brought up under the domestic rule of her mother, was now twenty-eight. Her youth softened the ungraceful cast of countenance which her resemblance to her mother sometimes lent to her features; but the maternal strictness had endowed her with two great qualities which might serve as a set-off against all defects; she was gentle and patient. Her sister, Mademoiselle Augustine, was barely eighteen; she bore no likeness either to father or mother. She was one of those girls who, from the absence of all physical bonds between them and their parents, support the old maids' saying that children are the gift of God.

Augustine was small, or better to describe her, little; and so full of simplicity and grace that a man of the world could find no fault in her except that her gestures, and sometimes her attitudes, were somewhat common, and that she was not perfectly free from constraint. Her still and silent features were suffused with that transient melancholy which seizes all young girls who lack strength to oppose a mother's will. The plainness of their dress always prevented the two sisters from satisfying the innate coquetry of woman, except by displaying a luxury of neatness which became them admirably and introduced an admirable harmony between them and the shining counters and the shelves, cleansed by the old servant from every particle of dust, and the antique simplicity of all their surroundings.

Forced by their mode of life to seek the elements of happiness in unremitting toil, Augustine and Virginie had never given cause for aught but satisfaction to their mother, who congratulated herself in secret on the perfection of her daughters' characters. It is easy to imagine the results of

the education which they had received. Brought up to business, accustomed to hear nought but discussions and calculations sombrely commercial; grammar, book-keeping, Jewish history, and Rajou's history of France, their only studies; their only reading, books approved by their mother; the ideas of the sisters were somewhat narrow. They had a perfect knowledge of housekeeping, were familiar with the prices of goods, understood the difficulty of making a fortune, were economical, and held in high esteem the qualities which go to make a man of business. Notwithstanding their father's wealth, they could darn a stocking as well as make a wreath; their mother often talked about teaching them cookery, in order that they might know how to order a dinner and scold a cook *secundum artem*. Ignorant of the pleasures of the world, and observing how placidly the exemplary life of their parents glided on, they very seldom cast a glance beyond the precincts of the old paternal house, which was their mother's universe. The whole future of their terrestrial pleasures consisted in the social gatherings

to which their family fête-days gave rise. When the large drawing-room on the second-floor was about to receive Madame Roguin, a Mademoiselle Chevrel fifteen years younger than her cousin and who wore diamonds, young Rabourdin, under-secretary in the Financial Department, Monsieur César Birotteau a rich perfumer and his wife, who went by the name of Madame César, Monsieur Camusot, the wealthiest silk-merchant in the Rue des Bourdonnais, his father-in-law Monsieur Cardot, two or three old bankers, and some ladies of spotless virtue; the preparations necessitated by the manner in which the plate, the Saxony porcelain, the candles and the crystals were packed up, introduced some diversion into the monotonous existence of these three women. They trotted about and became as excited as a parcel of nuns when they are about to receive their bishop. And then, when in the evening they were all three worn out with dusting, rubbing, and unpacking, Madame Guillaume would say to the girls as they helped her to undress, "We have done nothing to-day, my children." It would

sometimes happen upon these solemn occasions that "the messenger nun" would allow dancing, and confine the boston whist and backgammon parties to her bedroom. Such a concession was regarded as a most unlooked-for piece of happiness, and caused a joy not less than that of going to the two or three grand carnival balls to which M. Guillaume duly conducted his daughters. And then once a year the honest draper gave an entertainment for which he spared no expense. The persons invited, however wealthy and fashionable they might be, took care to be present; for the most important houses in the neighbourhood had recourse to the large fortune, vast credit, and matured experience of M. Guillaume. But the two girls of the worthy tradesman did not derive so much advantage as might be supposed from the instruction which the world offers to the young. The meanness of the dresses which they wore at these festivals (which by the way were carried to the profit and loss account of the house) made them feel ashamed. They had no particular turn for dancing, and their mother's watchful

eye precluded them from holding with their partners any conversation beyond yes and no. Then the law of the old sign of the Chat-qui-pelote compelled them to go home at eleven o'clock, the very moment when the ball and festive meetings begin to grow animated. Thus their diversions, seemingly in conformity with the fortune of their father, often became insipid through circumstances connected with the habits and principles of the establishment.

As to the routine of their daily existence, a single observation will describe it. Madame Guillaume required her daughters to be dressed very early in the morning, to put in an appearance at the same hour every day, and subjected their employments to a monastic regularity. Chance, however, had given to Augustine a mind sufficiently elevated to feel the emptiness of such an existence. Her blue eyes would at times be raised as if to interrogate the depths of the dark staircase, and the damp ware-rooms; after having sounded that cloistral silence, she seemed as it were to listen to the confused revelations of that passionate existence which places sentiments on a higher

level than things. At such moments her face would flush, her listless hand would drop the muslin on the polished oaken counter, and soon her mother's voice, which retained its native harshness even in its mildest tones, would be heard exclaiming,—

"Augustine, what are you thinking about, my treasure?"

It may be that "Hippolyte Comte de Douglas" and "Le Comte de Commingues," two novels recently discovered by Augustine in the chest of drawers of a cook recently dismissed by Madame Guillaume, had contributed to the development of the young girl, who had positively devoured them during the long nights of the preceding winter.

These manifestations of vague desire, the sweet voice, the jasmine skin and blue eyes of Augustine had then kindled in the heart of poor Lebas a passion as violent as it was respectful. Through a very intelligible caprice Augustine did not feel the slightest penchant for the orphan; perhaps because she was unconscious that he loved her. On the other hand, the long legs,

chestnut hair, large hands, and vigorous frame of the chief clerk had found a secret admirer in Mademoiselle Virginie, who, spite of her portion of 6000*l.*, was not sought by any one. Nothing could be more natural than these two cross-purpose passions born amid the silence of that obscure counter, just as the violets bloom in the deep woods. The mute and constant observation which through a violent desire for diversion amid that unceasing toil and that religious calm, chained the eyes of these young people upon one another, was certain sooner or later to excite love. To have a face constantly before our eyes leads us to trace in it the feelings of the heart, and ends by obliterating its defects.

"At the rate at which this man is travelling," said M. Guillaume to himself as he read the first decree whereby Napoleon anticipated the classes of conscripts, "our daughters will soon be going on their knees to a sweetheart."

And from that day forward, grieved to the heart to see his daughter fading, the old shopkeeper remembered that he had

married Mademoiselle Chevrel when their relative position was very much like that of Joseph Lebas and Virginie. It would be a capital stroke of business to get his daughter married, and at the same time discharge a sacred debt by bestowing on an orphan the benefits which he himself had formerly received at the hands of his predecessors, under similar circumstances.

Joseph Lebas however was thirty-three years of age, and was turning over in his mind the difficulties which a disparity of fifteen years would place between Augustine and him. He was, moreover, too clear-sighted not to guess the intention of M. Guillaume, and he was sufficiently well acquainted with his inexorable principles to know that the younger sister would never be allowed to marry until the elder was settled. Thus, then, the poor clerk whose heart was as noble as his legs were long, and his chest deep, suffered in silence.

Such was the condition of affairs in this small republic, which, while situated in the middle of the Rue St. Denis, bore a close

resemblance to a chapel of ease of La Trappe.

But in order to give an exact account of the external situation of affairs as well as of the internal feelings, we must go back to some months before the opening scene of the story.

It was nightfall when a young man passing before the dimly-lighted shop of the Chat-qui-pelote, stood still for a moment to contemplate a picture which would have arrested the attention of any painter in the world. The shop, as yet unilluminated, formed a black foreground, behind which was to be seen the shop-keeper's dining-room, over which an astral lamp was flinging that yellow light which gives so much grace to pictures belonging to the Dutch school. The white table-linen, the plate and the cut glasses formed brilliant accessories to the scene, which was still further enhanced by the keen contrast of light and shade. The face of the father of the family, that of his wife, the countenances of the clerks, and the pure outlines of the features of Augustine, close to whom stood a strapping red-faced servant-girl,

all these together formed a group so striking; the heads were so original, and each character was so frankly expressed on the features; while the peaceful, quiet, modest life of the family was so clearly to be gathered from the scene; that an artist accustomed to paint from nature might well experience a desperate desire to reproduce the chance-begotten picture.

The passenger whose gaze was thus arrested was a young painter who seven years before had gained the grand prize for painting.

He had just returned from Rome. His soul that had been fed on poetry, his eyes that had been satiated with Raphael and Michael Angelo, thirsted for genuine nature after his long sojourn in that land of pomp, over every part of which Art has thrown her majesty. False or not, such was his personal feeling on the subject. His heart that had been long abandoned to the torrent of Italy's impetuous passion, thirsted for one of those modest and retiring maidens which at Rome he had, unfortunately, found only upon canvas.

From the enthusiasm to which the natural

group he gazed on gave rise in his excited breast, he passed by a natural transition to a profound admiration for the principal figure. Augustine seemed pensive and was not eating; owing to the situation of the lamp, whose light fell full upon her face, her whole bust seemed to move in a circle of flame, which brought out more fully the contours of her head and lighted it up in a manner almost supernatural. Involuntarily the artist compared her to an angel bethinking herself of the heaven from which she had been banished. A sensation almost unknown before—a limpid boiling passion deluged his bosom.

After remaining for a moment almost crushed beneath the weight of his ideas, he tore himself away from the scene of his enjoyment and went home—but not to eat and not to sleep. The next day he shut himself in his studio and there remained until he had deposited on canvas the main scene whose memory had well-nigh turned him into a fanatic. His happiness was imperfect so long as he was without a faithful portrait of his idol. Several times did he pass before the Chat-qui-pelote;

once or twice he even had the hardihood to enter the shop in disguise in order to obtain a nearer view of the enchanting creature whom Madame Guillaume covered with her wing. During eight months, slave of his love and of his brushes, he remained invisible to his most intimate friends; the world, poetry, the drama, music and all his cherished habits, were forgotten.

One morning, Girodet broke through all the impediments to admission which artists know and can elude, burst in on him and roused him with the question, "What are you going to exhibit?"

The artist seized his friend's hand, dragged him to the studio and uncovered a little easel picture and a portrait.

Girodet, after a slow but eager contemplation of the two masterpieces, threw his arms round his comrade's neck, and silently embraced him. His feelings could not be expressed, save, as he experienced them, from heart to heart.

"You are in love?" said Girodet.

They both knew that the finest portraits of Titian, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci

were the offspring of excited feelings, which, under varying conditions, are the source of every kind of masterpiece. The young artist replied to the interrogation only by a movement of the head.

"Happy mortal, to be in love here after returning from Italy! I would not advise you," added the great painter, "to exhibit such works as these; for, look you, these two pictures will not be understood. These true colours, this prodigious labour cannot as yet be appreciated; the public are not accustomed to so much depth. The pictures which we paint, my good friend, are fire-screens and door-screens. Yes, let us rather write verses and translate the ancients, we shall reap more glory from that than from our miserable pictures."

In spite of this charitable advice the pictures were exhibited. The picture representing the interior created a revolution in painting. It gave rise to those pictures of "genre" which, to judge from the prodigious number of them imported into all our exhibitions, must, one would imagine, be produced by a purely mechanical process. As for the portrait, very few artists can

have forgotten that living canvas to which the public, which is occasionally just, as a body, assigned the crown that Girodet himself had awarded. The two pictures were surrounded by an immense crowd. There was a death struggle to get to them, as the women say. Enterprising purchasers and aristocratic magnates covered the pictures with double Napoleons, but the artist resolutely refused to sell them or to make copies of them. He was offered an enormous sum for permission to engrave them, but the men of business were as unsuccessful as the amateurs had been.

Now, although this adventure engaged the attention of the world, it was not of a kind to penetrate to the little Thebais of the Rue St. Denis. Yet it so happened that the notary's wife, during a visit to Madame Guillaume, mentioned the exhibition in the presence of Augustine, of whom she was very fond, and explained to her its object. The chatter of Madame Roguin naturally inspired Augustine with the desire to see the pictures, and the boldness to ask her cousin in secret to take her to the Louvre. The cousin succeeded in the

negotiation which she set on foot in order to obtain Madame Guillaume's consent to withdrawing her young cousin from her melancholy toils for about two hours, and so the young girl made her way through the crowd and reached the prize picture. She trembled like a birch leaf when she recognized her own likeness. She was frightened, and looked round in order to find her way back to Madame Roguin, from whom she was separated by a crowd of people. At that moment her frightened eyes encountered the excited face of the young painter. She at once recalled the features of a pedestrian whom in her curiosity she had often remarked, taking him for a new neighbour.

"You see what love has inspired me to do," whispered the artist to the timid creature, who was quite frightened at his words.

She summoned up a supernatural courage to pierce the crowd and rejoin her cousin, who was still busy trying to penetrate the mass of people, who kept her at a distance from the picture.

"You would be stifled if you got there," said Augustine. "Let us go."

But there are certain moments at the Exhibition when two women are not always at liberty to direct their steps in the galleries as they would. Mademoiselle Guillaume and her cousin were pushed to some little distance from the second picture by virtue of the irregular pressure of the crowd. As chance would have it, they found an easy access to the picture which fashion, for once in unison with the world of artists, had distinguished. The exclamation of surprise which escaped from the wife of the notary was lost among the hum and buzzing of the crowd; but Augustine shed involuntary tears at sight of the marvellous scene. Then, actuated by an almost inexplicable sentiment, she placed her finger on her lips as she caught sight of the ecstatic face of the young artist within two feet of her. The stranger responded by a movement of the head and indicated that Madame Roguin was *de trop*, in order to show Augustine that she was understood. This pantomime was like a furnace to the young girl, who looked upon herself as a criminal at the idea that a compact had just been entered into between her and the

artist. The stifling heat, the constant sight of the most brilliant costumes, and the stupefaction which Augustine experienced at the truth of the colours, the crowd of faces on canvas or alive, and the profusion of gilt frames, excited in the girl a species of intoxication which redoubled her apprehensions. She would perhaps have fainted, but that in spite of this chaos of sensations she felt in the depths of her heart a rising joy that gave fresh life to her whole frame. At the same time she believed that she was under the empire of that demon, of whose fearful snares she had heard from the thundering lips of the preacher. That moment was to her a moment of madness. She found herself escorted to the carriage of her aunt by the young painter, buoyant with happiness and love. An excitement altogether unknown, an intoxication which in some sort made her the prey of her natural feelings, led her to listen to the eloquent language of her heart, and several times she cast upon the young painter a glance in which was written all the emotion which she felt; never had the carnation of her cheek formed a more

striking contrast with the whiteness of her skin. The artist then beheld her beauty in all its bloom, her modesty in all its glory. Augustine experienced a mingled sensation of joy aud terror when she recognized that her presence was the source of the happiness of him whose name was on every lip and whose talent conferred immortality upon a transient image. She was beloved; there could be no doubt of that. When the artist was no longer in her presence, the simple words, "You see what love has inspired me to do," still found an echo in her heart, and its yet deeper palpitations seemed to her quite painful; so great were the unknown powers stirred within her by her now more ardent blood. She feigned a violent headache in order that she might avoid answering the questions of her cousin about the pictures; but when they got back to the house, Madame Roguin could not keep herself from speaking to Madame Guillaume of the celebrity which the Chat-qui-pelote had acquired, and Augustine trembled in every limb when she heard her mother announce her intention to go to the Exhibition to see her own house. The

young girl renewed her complaints and was allowed to go to bed. "Yes, that is just what one gets by going to see these sights—headaches," said M. Guillaume; "It is so very amusing to see on a piece of canvas what you can see every day in our street. Don't talk to me about your artists, they are just like your authors—starvation birds. Why the devil do they want to take my house and vilipend it in their pictures?"

"It may lead to our selling a few more ells of cloth," said Joseph Lebas. But spite of this observation, art and thought were once again found guilty at the tribunal of commerce. It may well be supposed that such conversation as this did not greatly raise the hopes of Augustine, who, during the night resigned herself to her first love meditation. The events of the day were like a dream, which it pleased her to reproduce in thought. She underwent her apprenticeship to those fears, those hopes, and that remorse, to all those undulations of feeling, by which a heart so simple and so timid as hers must needs be swayed. What a void she now discovered in that dark dwelling! what a treasure she

discovered in her heart! To be the wife of a man of talent, to share his glory; what ravages must such a thought create in the heart of a child nurtured in the bosom of such a family! What hopes did the idea awaken in a young woman who, educated as yet on vulgar principles, had nevertheless wished for a life of elegance. A ray of light had lighted up the prison, and all at once Augustine loved. In her case so many feelings were gratified at once that she succumbed without a single calculation. At the age of eighteen love throws its prism between the eyes of a young girl and the world. Without an inkling of the stern realities which result from the union of a loving woman with a man of imagination, she believed herself called upon to confer happiness on her artist, without perceiving any disparity between herself and him. To her the present was the whole future.

When, on the morrow, Augustine's father and mother returned from the Exhibition, their faces showed that they had sustained some disappointment. In the first place, the two pictures had been removed, and in

the second, Madame Guillaume had lost her Cashmere shawl. When Augustine heard of the disappearance of the paintings, following her visit to the Exhibition, she saw in it, that delicacy of sentiment which women always appreciate, even instinctively.

The morning on which, on his returning from a ball, Theodore de Sommervieux, for that was the name which renown had carried to Augustine's ear, was sprinkled by the clerks of the Chat-qui-pelote, as he waited for the appearance of his simple mistress, who certainly was unconscious of his presence, was the fourth occasion only, on which the two lovers had seen each other, since the scene which had taken place at the Exhibition. The obstacles which the *régime* of the Guillaume establishment opposed to the fiery temper of the artist, gave to his passion for Augustine a violence that may readily be imagined. How was it possible to accost a young girl seated at a counter between two such women as Virginie and Madame Guillaume? How could he correspond with her when her mother never left her? With that skill in

creating imaginary troubles which every lover displays, Theodore made one of the clerks his rival, and made the others his accomplices. Could he deceive so many Arguses, he saw himself discovered by the severe eyes of the old shopkeeper and Madame Guillaume. Everywhere were barriers, everywhere despair. The very vehemence of the young painter's passion prevented him from hitting upon those ingenious expedients, which with prisoners as with lovers, seem to be the last effort of reason stirred by the savage thirst for liberty, or by the fire of love.

Theodore patrolled the neighbourhood with the restlessness of a madman, as if motion might suggest devices. After having thoroughly tortured his brain, it occurred to him to bribe the blowsy servant. Thus it happened that sundry letters were exchanged at distant intervals during the fortnight which followed the unlucky morning on which M. Guillaume and Theodore had examined each other with such minute attention.

At the period at which our story has now arrived, the two young people had

agreed to see each other at a certain hour every weekday, and on Sunday at St. Leu during mass and vespers. Augustine had sent her beloved Theodore a list of the relations and friends of the family; and to these the young painter tried to get introduced in order to engage, if possible, in the interest of his love, one of these hearts, to which money and business were the be-all and the end-all, and a genuine passion, a most monstrous, a most unheard-of speculation. For the rest, the habits of the inmates of the Chat-qui-pelote had undergone no change. If Augustine was preoccupied, if in violation of all obedience to the law of the domestic charter, she went up to her bedroom to establish, by means of a pot of flowers, signals with her lover; if she sighed, if indeed she *thought*, no one, not even her mother, noticed it. This circumstance may cause some surprise to those who have seized the pervading spirit of this house, where any idea tainted with poetry must necessarily be in opposition to its inmates and its furniture; where no one could indulge in a gesture or a look that were not seen and analyzed.

And yet nothing could be more natural; for the tranquil vessel which sailed the stormy sea of the Exchange of Paris under the flag of the Chat-qui-pelote, was at this time the prey of one of those gales which from the periodicity of their return we may style equinoctial. For the last five days the five men who constituted the crew, Madame Guillaume and Mademoiselle Virginie, had been engaged in that engrossing toil, which is called stock-taking. Every package was turned over, and the measure of every piece was taken, in order to ascertain the exact value of the remnant. The ticket affixed to each parcel was carefully examined, in order to fix the date when the cloth was purchased. The exact price was determined. Ever on foot, with his ellwand in his hand, M. Guillaume resembled a captain giving orders as to the conduct of the vessel. His shrill voice echoing through a loophole in interrogation of the deeps that lay beneath the hatchways of the lower shop, gave forth those barbarous commercial phrases which can only be expressed by enigmatic signs. "How much of H.N.Z.?" "All gone."

"What left of Q.X.?" "Two ells." "What price?" "Five five three." "Put all J.J., all M.P., and the residue of V.D.O. in three A.;" and a thousand other phrases equally intelligible, rumbled over the counters, like the lines of some modern poem recited by the votaries of the Romantic School in order to keep alive their enthusiam for one of their poets. In the evening Guillaume shut himself up with his chief clerk and his wife, paid accounts, carried them over, wrote to delinquents, and jotted up invoices. All three of them took part in the immense labour whose result contained in a simple sheet of foolscap—proved to the house of Guillaume that it was worth so much in cash, so much in goods, so much in drafts and bills; that it did not owe a farthing; that it was a creditor to the amount of from four to eight thousand pounds; that its capital had increased, and that its farms were to be increased, houses repaired, or rents doubled. Whence this obvious consequence—that it was absolutely necessary to begin with redoubled ardour the task of piling crown on crown. Never did it

occur to those brave ants to ask themselves the question—*Cui bono?*

Under cover of this annual commotion the happy Augustine escaped the scrutiny of her Arguses. At length one Saturday evening the stock-taking came to an end. The sum total of the credits showed a sufficient number of cyphers to induce M. Guillaume under the circumstances to suspend the severe restriction which reigned throughout the year—as to dessert. The wily draper rubbed his hands and allowed his clerks to remain at table. Scarcely had each member of the crew finished his little glass of home-made liqueur when the roll of carriage-wheels was heard. The family was going to see Cinderella at the Variétés, while the two junior clerks received each a double crown piece, with permission to go where they liked, provided always that they were home by twelve o'clock.

In spite of this debauch, the old draper was busy at six o'clock next morning, shaving himself, incasing himself in his maroon-coloured coat, from whose splendour he always derived the same amount

of satisfaction, and fastening the golden buckles of his velvet breeches. At seven o'clock, while all was still silent throughout the house, he directed his steps to the little cabinet attached to his first floor shop. This cabinet was lighted by a window protected by strong iron bars, and looking on a little square court whose walls were so black that it looked like a well. The old tradesman opened with his own hand the iron-plated shutters which he knew so well, and raised one half of the glazed framework of the window. The chilly air of the court rushed in and cooled the heated atmosphere of the cabinet, which was redolent of that odour which is peculiar to offices. Upright he stood, with his hand resting on the greasy arm of a cane chair covered with morocco whose original colour had disappeared. He seemed to hesitate about sitting down. As he looked at the bureau with its double desk, near which his wife's seat was placed in a little arch let into the wall, opposite to his own seat, his features softened. He looked at the numbered boxes, the bands, the utensils, the branding-irons, and the

cash-box—objects of immemorial origin, and seemed to feel the shadowy presence of the deceased Chevrel. He pushed forward the very stool on which he used himself to sit in the presence of his departed patron. This stool, covered with black leather, and whose horsehair stuffing had long since been exposed though without actually escaping, he placed with trembling hand upon the very spot where his predecessor had placed it. Then with an agitation difficult to describe, he pulled the bell-rope which communicated with the bedhead of Joseph Lebas. When this decisive blow had been struck, the old man whose reminiscences were undoubtedly too overpowering, took up two or three bills of exchange which had been presented to him, and gazed at them, though without really seeing them, when Joseph Lebas suddenly appeared.

"Sit down there," said Guillaume, pointing to the stool.

As this was the first time that the old master-draper had ever made his clerk sit down in his presence, Joseph Lebas trembled.

"What do you think of these drafts?" asked Guillaume.

"They won't be paid."

"Why?"

"Oh, I heard that Étienne and Co. were paying in gold the day before yesterday."

"Ah, ah!" cried the draper; "people must be very sick when they show their bile. Let us change the subject. Joseph, the stock-taking is finished."

"Yes, sir, and the dividend is one of the best you ever had."

"Don't use those newfangled words, say 'the product,' Joseph. Do you know, my lad, that it is in some measure to you that we owe these results? which being so, I don't wish to pay you by salary any longer. Madame Guillaume has suggested to me the idea of offering you a share—there, Joseph! Guillaume and Lebas won't sound badly as the name of a firm, will they? We might add 'and company' to round the signature."

Tears stood in Joseph's eyes, but he made an effort to conceal them. "Ah, M. Guillaume! what have I done to deserve

such goodness? I do only my duty. It was no slight matter for you to take an interest in a poor orph—"

He began to brush the braid of his left sleeve with the right, and dared not look at the old man, who smiled at the thought that the modest youth, like himself in former days, required to be encouraged to render the explanation complete.

"But at the same time," resumed the father of Virginie, "you have no great title to this favour, Joseph. You are not so frank with me as I am with you." (At these words the clerk briskly raised his head.) "You know the secrets of the strong box. During the last two years I have told you nearly all my affairs. In short, I have concealed nothing from you. But as for you—you have a certain predilection, and have not said a single word to me about it." (Joseph Lebas blushed,) "Ah, ah!" cried Guillaume; "did you think you could deceive an old fox like me —me, who, to your knowledge, smelt the Lecocq failure?"

"What, sir," answered Joseph Lebas, examining his patron as carefully as his

patron examined him, "you know whom I love?"

"I know all, you good-for-nothing fellow!" said the worthy and crafty tradesman, tweaking the end of Lebas' ear, "and I forgive you. I did just what you have done."

"And you will give her to me?"

"Yes, with a portion of 6000*l.*, and will leave you as much more, and we will embark upon fresh enterprises under a new firm. We will brew some more business yet, lad," cried the old shopkeeper, rising and flinging his arms about. "Look you, son-in-law, there is nothing like business. Those who want to know what pleasure one can find in it, are idiots. To be on the track of what is going on, to know how to take the lead on 'Change, to wait anxiously as if one were at the gaming-table, to see whether Étienne and Company turn bankrupt or not; to see a regiment of the imperial guard dressed in our cloth pass by, to trip up (in all honesty, be it understood) one's neighbour; to produce cheaper than others; to follow up a scheme from its first rough sketch—as it begins, grows, falters, and

succeeds; to know, just like a minister of police, all the secret springs of commercial houses, in order not to take the wrong road, to keep one's feet when others go to wreck and ruin; to have correspondents in every manufacturing town; isn't this a continual game, Joseph? That is what I call life. I shall die amid this bustle as old Chevrel did—but still taking things easily."

In the heat of the longest impromptu he had ever indulged in, Father Guillaume had scarcely looked at his clerk, who was shedding scalding tears, "Why, Joseph, my good lad, what is the matter?"

"Oh, I love her so dearly, M. Guillaume, that my heart fails me. I believe—"

"Well, my lad," said the tradesman, who was touched, "you are more lucky than you imagine, by Jove; for she loves you! I know it!" and he winked his small green eyes as he looked at his clerk.

"Mademoiselle Augustine, Mademoiselle Augustine!" cried Joseph Lebas, in his enthusiasm.

He was about to rush out of the cabinet, when he felt himself stopped by an arm

of iron, and his astounded patron hastily placed him before him again.

"What has Augustine to do with this business?" asked Guillaume, in a voice which instantly froze the unfortunate Lebas.

"Is it not she . . . whom . . . I am in love with?" asked the stuttering clerk.

Guillaume, disconcerted at his own want of perspicacity, resumed his seat and placed his piriform head on his two hands, to reflect upon the strange position in which he found himself. Joseph Lebas, desperate and ashamed, remained upon his legs.

"Joseph," resumed the draper with frigid dignity, "I was talking to you about Virginie. Love cannot be commanded, I well know. I know your discretion, we will forget all that. I will never allow Augustine to marry before Virginie; your interest in the business will be ten per cent."

The clerk, inspired by love, with almost boundless courage and eloquence, clasped his hands, spoke up, and for a quarter of an hour discoursed with so much warmth

and good feeling, that the situation changed. If this had been a matter of business, the old trader would have had certain fixed rules to guide him to a decision. But thrown as he was a thousand leagues out of the domain of commerce, and afloat without compass upon the sea of sentiment, he drifted irresolutely before an event so original, as he termed it. Carried away by his fatherly affection he spoke a little at random.

"What the devil, Joseph, you need not be told that I had my two children at an interval of ten years. Mademoiselle Chevrel was not handsome, but she has no reason to complain of my conduct to her. Do as I did before you; give over crying, and don't be stupid. What would you have? the matter will perhaps be settled, there is always some way out of a scrape. We men are not always like gingerbread to our wives,—do you take me? Madame Guillaume is a little over-religious, and—come my boy, give your arm to Augustine this morning as you go to mass."

Such were the exclamations which Guillaume randomly ejaculated. The conclu-

sion with which they wound up threw the enamoured youth into ecstasies. When he quitted the smoky little cabinet, after having squeezed the hand of his future father-in-law, and proclaimed with a little look of intelligence that all would turn out for the best, he was already planning a marriage between Mademoiselle Virginie and one of his friends.

"What will Madame Guillaume think of it?" Such was the idea that prodigiously tormented the worthy tradesman when he found himself alone.

At breakfast Madame Guillaume and Virginie, whom the draper had provisionally left in the dark as to his disappointment, looked very knowingly at Joseph Lebas, who displayed grave embarrassment. The modesty of the clerk made a favourable impression upon his mother-in-law. The matron regained so much of her youthful gaiety that she smiled at M. Guillaume, and indulged in some of those little pleasantries which are so well established in these innocent households. She expressed a doubt about the relative heights of Virginie and Joseph, in order to get

them to stand up together. This preliminary trifling produced some clouds upon the brow of the head of the family, and he even affected such a passion for decorum as to tell Augustine to take the chief clerk's arm as they went to St. Leu. Madame Guillaume, astonished at so much delicacy on the part of a man, honoured her husband with an approving nod. So the procession, so marshalled as to afford no ground for the mischievous interpretation of the neighbours, left the house.

"Don't you think, Mademoiselle Augustine," said the trembling clerk, "that the wife of a tradesman whose credit is staunch, of such a man as M. Guillaume for example, might allow herself a little more amusement than Madame Guillaume takes, might wear diamonds, keep a carriage? For my own part, if I married, I should like to take all the trouble on my own shoulders and see my wife enjoy herself. I should not put her in my counting-house. For, you see, in the cloth-trade, women are not wanted as they were in former times. M. Guillaume was quite right to act as he did, and besides, it was his wife's desire. But it seems to

me, that if a woman keeps her eye upon the book-keeping, the correspondence, the details of the business, the orders, and her own household affairs, that is all that could be expected. After seven o'clock, when the shop was closed, I, for my part, should amuse myself, go to the theatre, and see a little society. But you are not listening to me."

"Oh yes, I am, Mr. Joseph. What do you think of painting? is not that a good calling?"

"Yes, I know a house-painter in a large way of business—M. Lourdois, who has plenty of money."

Thus chattering the family reached the church of St. Leu.

There Madame Guillaume resumed her authority, and for the first time made Augustine sit beside her, while Virginie took the fourth seat beside Lebas. During the sermon all went well between Augustine and Theodore, who, standing behind a pillar, prayed to his Madonna with the utmost fervour. But at the raising of the host, Madame Guillaume perceived, rather late in the day, that her daughter Augus-

tine was holding her prayer-book upside down. She was about to scold her vigorously, when lowering her veil, she took her eyes off her book, and began to gaze in the direction affected by her daughter's eyes.

Aided by her spectacles she caught sight of the young artist, whose mundane elegance seemed to denote him some cavalry captain on furlough, rather than a tradesman of the district. It is difficult to imagine the state of agitation into which Madame Guillaume was thrown by discovering this clandestine love in Augustine's heart. She who flattered herself that she had brought her daughters up with the utmost propriety! Her prudery and ignorance, led her to magnify the danger. She believed her daughter corrupted to the very core.

"Hold your book properly, miss," she exclaimed in a low tone, though she was trembling with anger. She quickly snatched the accusing prayer-book from her daughter's hand and restored the letters to their natural direction.

"Don't make the mistake of raising

your eyes from your prayers," she added, "otherwise you will have me to deal with. After mass your father and I will have something to say to you."

These words were like a thunderbolt to poor Augustine. She felt herself fainting, but between the pain she felt and the fear of creating a scandal in the church, she found courage to conceal her anguish. However, it was easy to discern her excitement by the trembling of her prayer-book, and the tears which she shed on each leaf she turned.

From the indignant look cast at him by Madame Guillaume, the artist saw the perils that assailed his amour, and left the church with rage in his heart, and fired with the determination to dare everything.

"Go to your room, miss," said Madame Guillaume to her daughter on their return to the house; "we will send for you; and take special care that you don't leave it."

The conference between husband and wife was so secret that not a jot of it transpired at first. Virginie, however, who had

encouraged her sister by a thousand gentle suggestions, carried her *complaisance* so far as to steal to the door of her mother's bedroom, where the discussion was going on, in order to pick up some phrases. The first journey which she made from the third to the second storey, she heard her father exclaim,—

"Do you want to kill your child, then, madame?"

"My poor darling," said Virginie to her weeping sister, "papa is taking your part."

"And what do they mean to do to Theodore?" asked the simple creature.

The inquisitive Virginie then went down again. This time she stayed longer, and learned that Lebas was in love with Augustine. It was decreed that during this memorable day a house generally so calm should be a little hell. Monsieur Guillaume threw Lebas into despair by informing him of Augustine's love for a stranger. Lebas, who had instructed his friend to solicit the hand of Mademoiselle Virginie, thus saw all his castles in the air overthrown. Mademoiselle Virginie, over-

whelmed at the news that Joseph Lebas had in a manner refused her, was seized with a headache. The dissension sown between the husband and wife by the explanation which had taken place between Monsieur and Madame Guillaume—the first occasion during their married life that had found them of different opinions—showed itself in a fashion truly terrible.

At length at four o'clock in the afternon Augustine, pale, trembling, and red-eyed, stood before her father and mother. Fortified by the address of her father, who had promised to listen to her in silence, she gathered a certain courage as she pronounced in presence of her parents the name of her dear Theodore de Sommervieux, and cunningly emphasized its aristocratic particle. Yielding to the novel charm of speaking of her sentiments, she gained sufficient confidence to declare with an innocent firmness that she loved M. de Sommervieux, that she had written to him, and she added with tears in her eyes, "to sacrifice me to another would be to render me miserable."

"But, Augustine, you don't know what an

artist is then," cried her mother in dismay.

"Madame Guillaume," said the old father, silencing his good lady.

"Augustine," he continued, "artists are, as a general rule, starvation birds. They are too extravagant to be other than ne'er-do-wells. The late M. Joseph Vernet, the late M. Lekain, and the late M. Noverre, were customers of mine. Oh, if you only knew what tricks that M. Noverre, the Chevalier de St. Georges, and especially M. Phillidor, played poor dead daddy Chevrel. They are a droll set of fellows and no mistake. They have all of them a way of talking—and manners—oh, as for your Monsieur de Sumer—Somm—"

"De Sommervieux, father."

"Well De Sommervieux then—he can never have made himself so agreeable to you as M. le Chevalier de St. Georges was to me the day when I obtained a judgment of the consuls against him. Ah, they were people of quality in those days."

"Ah, but father, Monsieur Theodore is of noble blood, and he told me in one of his letters that he was rich, and that his

father was called the Chevalier de St. Georges before the revolution."

At these words M. Guillaume looked at his formidable better-half, who, like a woman baulked of her will, beat the floor with her foot and maintained a frigid silence. She even averted her indignant gaze from Augustine, and seemed to leave all the responsibility of so grave a matter to M. Guillaume, since her warning was unheeded. Nevertheless, in spite of her seeming indifference, when she saw her husband making up his mind so easily on a matter out of the ordinary routine of business, she exclaimed,—

"Well, I must say that as regards your daughters, your weakness is—but—"

The noise of a carriage stopping at the door of the house, suddenly interrupted the lecture which the old shopkeeper was already dreading. In an instant Madame Roguin stood in the middle of the room, and looking at the three actors of this domestic scene, said with a patronizing air,—

"I know all that has happened, cousin." Madame Roguin had one fault; she be-

lieved that the wife of a Parisian notary could play the part of a *petite-maîtresse*.

"I know all," she repeated, "and I am come to Noah's ark like the dove with the olive branch. I found that allegory in the 'Génie du Christianisme,'" said she, turning towards Madame Guillaume; "the comparison ought to please you, cousin. Do you know," she added, smiling at Augustine, "that this Monsieur de Sommervieux is a charming man. This morning he presented me with my portrait painted in a masterly fashion. It is worth at least 240*l.*"

And so saying she tapped M. Guillaume's arm. The old tradesman pursed up his mouth in a manner peculiar to himself.

"I know M. de Sommervieux well," resumed *the dove*. For the past fortnight he has attended my soirées, of which he is the life. He has confided to me all his love difficulties and engaged me as his advocate. I learned this morning his admiration for Augustine, and he must have her. Oh, don't shake your head, cousin—but listen. They will make him a baron; he has just been appointed a Chevalier of the Legion

of Honour by the Emperor in person, at the Exhibition. Roguin is now his notary, and knows the position of his affairs. Well, M. de Sommervieux derives from good substantial acres nearly 500*l.* a year. Are you aware that the father-in-law of a man like him may become a somebody; mayor of his arrondissement, for example? Have you not seen M. Dupont made a count and senator of the empire on account of his having presented himself in his capacity of mayor to pay his respects to the Emperor on his entry into Vienna? Oh, the marriage will take place; for my part I adore the young fellow. His conduct towards Augustine is such as one meets with only in novels. Come, my darling, you will be happy and everybody will envy you. Why, the Duchess of Carigliano, who comes to my soirées, is fascinated with M. de Sommervieux. Some ill-natured people say that she only comes to my parties to meet *him*, as if a duchess of yesterday were out of place in the house of a Chevrel whose family can boast a hundred years of good *bourgeoisie*."

"Augustine," continued Madame Roguin

after a little pause, "I have seen the portrait. In truth it is beautiful. Do you know that the Emperor wanted to see it? He said laughingly to the Vice-constable, that if there were many such women as that at his court while he had so many kings there, he would be pretty sure to keep Europe in perpetual peace. Isn't that flattering?" The storms which ushered in that day were destined to resemble those of nature in being followed by a calm. Madame Roguin brought into play so many seductions in her harangue, and touched at once so many strings in the dry bosoms of M. and Madame Guillaume, that she ended by finding one of which she made good use.

At this strange epoch of French history, bankers and men of business were more than ever infected with the wild craze of intermarrying with the aristocracy, and the generals of the empire turned the inclination to good account. M. Guillaume opposed with unusual strength the ill-starred mania. His cherished axioms were, that a woman, if she desired happiness, ought to marry a man in her own class;

that one was sure to be punished sooner or later for trying to rise above one's sphere; that love stood the wear and tear of family life so badly that both parties, to have a chance of being happy, must possess very substantial qualities; that it was not well for either of the married couple to be more intelligent than the other, because the first requirement was a mutual understanding; if the husband talked Greek, while the wife spoke Latin, they ran the risk of dying of starvation. He had invented a sort of proverb on the subject. He compared marriages thus concluded to those old stuffs which were half silk and half wool; the silk always destroyed the wool in the long-run. So great, however, is the fund of vanity in the human heart, that the prudence of the pilot who steered the Chat-qui-pelote with such address yielded to the aggressive volubility of Madame Roguin. The rigid Madame Guillaume was the first to discover in her daughter's predilection reasons for departing from the principles which have been mentioned, and for permitting the visits of Monsieur de Sommervieux, whom,

she internally resolved to subject to a searching scrutiny.

The old man of business went in quest of Joseph Lebas, and told him the position of affairs. At half-past six the dining-room on which the artist had conferred celebrity, united beneath its roof of glass, Madame and M. Roguin, the young painter, and his charming Augustine, Joseph Lebas, who endured his good fortune with resignation, and Virginie, whose headache had disappeared. Monsieur and Madame Guillaume saw in perspective their children married and the destinies of the Chat-qui-pelote entrusted to skilful hands. Their contentment reached its acme when Theodore, at the dessert-table, presented them with the marvellous picture which they had been unable to see, and which represented the interior of the old shop that had given rise to so much happiness.

"It's very pretty," cried Guillaume. "Fancy offering 1200*l.* for that."

"Ah, it's because my weepers are in it," continued Madame Guillaume.

"And these unfolded stuffs," said Joseph Lebas; "one can almost feel them."

"Drapery always looks well in a picture," replied the painter. "We modern artists would be overjoyed if we could rival the perfection of antique drapery."

"Oh, if you go in for drapery, I am with you, my young friend. Since you have a respect for trade, we shall hit it off together; and why should people despise trade? The world sprang from trade since Adam sold Paradise for an apple. That wasn't a very good stroke of business though." And the old tradesman broke out into loud and unrestrained laughter, excited by the champagne which he circulated freely. The band which covered the eyes of the young artist was so thick, that he thought his parents, that were to be, quite agreeable. He did not disdain to amuse them by some lively sallies in perfectly good taste, and so made himself a general favourite. In the evening, when the company had left the drawing-room with its substantial furniture (to employ one of Guillaume's expressions), and while Madame Guillaume bustled about from table to mantelpiece and from chandelier to candlestick, hastily blowing out the waxlights, the worthy tradesman, who

was always keen-sighted where business or money was in question, drew his daughter Augustine to his side, and taking her upon his knees, thus addressed her,—

"My dear child, you shall marry Sommervieux, since such is your desire. You have a right to risk your capital of happiness. But I am not to be caught by your 1200*l.* gained by spoiling good canvas: money earned so quickly goes as quickly. Didn't I hear the young madcap say this very evening that if money was round, it was made so, that it might roll. If money is round for spendthrifts, it is flat for the economical people who amass it. Now, child, this handsome spark of yours talks about letting you have carriages and jewels. He has money; if he chooses to spend it on you, *bene sit*. I have nothing to do with that; but as to what I give you, I don't want the crowns it has cost me so much trouble to get together, to be spent on carriages and trinkets. The man who spends too much is never rich. With the 6000*l.* that make your portion, you can't as yet buy the whole of Paris. You may some day receive a few thousands more; good.

I will make you wait for them as long as possible. Well, I took your intended into a quiet corner, and the man who managed the Lecocq bankruptcy so skilfully did not experience much difficulty in getting an artist to consent to a marriage settlement protecting the wife's fortune. I will keep an eye upon the deed of settlement, to see that the money he proposes to settle on you is all right; come, my child, I hope soon to be a grandfather. I am already anxious to busy myself about my grandchildren; swear to me, then, here on the spot, never to sign any document relating to money without my advice, and that in case I go to join old father Chevrel too soon, you will consult young Lebas, your brother-in-law; now promise me."

"Yes, father, I swear it."

At these words uttered in a gentle voice the old man kissed his daughter first on one cheek and then on the other. That night all the lovers slept almost as peacefully as M. and Madame Guillaume.

Some months after this memorable Sunday, the high altar at St. Leu witnessed two very different marriages. Augustine

and Theodore presented themselves in all the glittering parade of happiness; their eyes overflowed with love; their toilettes were most elegant, while a dashing equipage awaited them. Virginie, accompanied by her family, came in a decent hackney carriage; and leaning on her father's arm and more simply attired, followed her younger sister like a shadow, necessary to complete the harmony of the picture. M. Guillaume had taken the utmost possible trouble to induce the clergy to marry Virginie before Augustine; but he had to undergo the mortification of seeing both the superior and inferior clergy address themselves in the first instance to the more elegant of the two brides. He overheard some of the neighbours express marked approval of the good sense of Mademoiselle Virginie, who was making, as they said, the more solid marriage and remaining faithful to the quarter, while they indulged in certain disparaging comments, born of envy, upon Augustine, who was marrying an artist and a nobleman. They added with a sort of horror, that if the Guillaumes gave way to ambition, the

drapery trade was doomed. An old fan merchant, having remarked that that spendthrift would very soon reduce Augustine to a bed of straw, father Guillaume secretly congratulated himself on the prudence which he had displayed in the provisions of the marriage settlement.

In the evening, after a sumptuous ball, followed by one of those abundant suppers which in the present generation are almost forgotten, M and Madame Guillaume stayed at their house in the Rue Colombier in which the marriage festivities had been held; M. and Madame Lebas returned in their hired carriage to the old house in the Rue St. Denis, there to direct the course of the good ship Chat-qui-pelote; while the artist, intoxicated with happiness, took his beloved Augustine in his arms, and when their carriage reached the Rue des Trois Frères, raised her quickly and carried her to a room which all the arts had combined to embellish. The impetuous passion with which Theodore was inspired continued for nearly one whole rapid year, during which not the slightest cloud overshadowed the azure

heaven under which they dwelt. With the two lovers life had no burdens. Theodore surrounded each passing day with incredible flourishes of happiness; he took pleasure in varying the transports of passion by that soft languor of repose in which two souls are launched so far in ecstasy that they seem to forget their bodily ties. The happy Augustine, incapable of reflection, gave herself up to the rhythmical march of her joy; she did not feel that she did as much as was required of her by yielding entirely to the lawful and sanctified love of marriage. In her artlessness and simplicity, moreover, she was entirely ignorant of the coquetry of withholding her favours and of the adroit caprices, whereby the young ladies of high life secure an empire over their husbands. She loved too well, to indulge in calculations of the future, nor did it ever enter her head that so delightful an existence could ever cease. Happy then in being the source of all her husband's pleasures, she believed that his inextinguishable love would ever be the brightest of all her jewels, just as

her devotion and obedience would form an eternal attraction; and, moreover, the happiness that waits on love had rendered her so radiant, that her beauty inspired her with pride, and assured her of her continued power to reign over a man so susceptible as M. de Sommervieux. Thus her position as a wife taught her nothing but the mere lessons of love. In the midst of her happiness she remained the ignorant little girl who led an obscure existence in the Rue St. Denis, and she did not think of acquiring the manners, the education, and the tone, of the world in which she was called upon to live. Her language being the language of love, she displayed in the use of it a certain suppleness of intellect and delicacy of expression, but then she was employing the language which all women have in common, when plunged in the passion which seems to be their element. If it came to pass that Augustine gave vent to any ideas that jarred with those of Theodore, the young artist laughed at them, as one laughs at the first mistakes made by a foreigner, which nevertheless grow wearisome if he fails to correct

them. In spite of such a fund of love, Sommervieux at the end of this all brief and happy twelvemonth, felt the necessity of recurring to his old labours and modes of life. In addition to this his wife was *enceinte*. Thus he saw his friends once more. During the protracted sufferings of the year during which a young wife suckles her first child, he worked, it is true, with ardour, but he from time to time returned to seek some distraction in society. The house which he most readily visited, was that of the Duchess de Carigliano, who had at last succeeded in securing the celebrated artist as one of her habitués. When Augustine had regained her strength, and her son no longer needed the unremitting care which precludes a mother from entering into the gaieties of social life, Theodore had begun to desire that satisfaction which our self-love derives from appearing in society accompanied by a beautiful woman who is an object at once of envy and admiration. Augustine reaped a fresh harvest of pleasure in parading reception-room after reception-room, surrounded by the éclat conferred

by her husband's fame, and in finding herself envied by other women. But this was the last ray shed by her married bliss. She began by wounding her husband's vanity, when, in spite of her fruitless efforts, she exposed her ignorance, the impropriety of her language, and the narrowness of her ideas. At the expiration of two years and a half the taming influence of the first transports of passion passed away; the character of De Sommervieux regained, as the satiety of lengthened possession set in, its original bent; and he returned to that course of life from which he had for a brief period deviated. Poetry, painting, the exquisite delights of the imagination, possess over elevated minds claims which no prescription can defeat. These claims of a powerful mind had not in Theodore's case been defeated during these two years. They had simply found fresh pasturage, When the fields of love were thoroughly explored, when, like some child, the artist had gathered roses and cornflowers with such avidity that his hands could hold no more, the scene changed. If he showed his wife the sketches of his most beautiful

compositions, he would hear her exclaim just as her father Guillaume would have done, "That's very pretty."

This lukewarm admiration was not the result of internal conviction, but of faith *on word of love*. Augustine preferred one look to the most beautiful picture. The only sublime she recognized was that of the heart. In short, Theodore could not resist the proof of this cruel fact; his wife was not alive to poetry, she did not live in his world; she did not share his whims, his sudden inspirations, his joys and sorrows. Her foot was on the solid earth of prosaic reality, while his head was in the skies. Ordinary minds cannot appreciate the constantly recurring sufferings of him, who, being united to another by the closest of all ties, is perpetually forced to trample down the most treasured flights of his fancy, and to annihilate the images which a magic power constrains him to create. In his case the torture is the more cruel in that the fundamental law of the feeling which he entertains towards his companion compels them to hide nothing from each other, and to share both the out-pour of

the brain and of the heart. Not with impunity can we do violence to the dictates of nature; she is inexorable as fate, which indeed is a species of social nature.

Sommervieux sought refuge in the silence and the calm of his studio, while he nourished the hope, that the habit of living among artists might form his wife and develope in her those dormant germs of high intelligence which certain gifted spirits hold to be innate in every human being. But Augustine was too sincerely religious not to be alarmed at the tone assumed by artists. At the first dinner given by Theodore she heard a young painter say, with that childish levity which she could not discern, and which robs a joke of all its impiety, "Yes, madame, but your paradise is not more beautiful than the Transfiguration of Raphael, and yet I grew tired of looking at that;" and thus it happened that Augustine encountered this witty society with a feeling of distrust which no one could fail to perceive. She prevented people from feeling themselves at their ease. Now artists suffering under such constraint are unmerciful; they resort

either to flight or to ridicule. Madame Guillaume, among other absurdities in which she indulged, carried to a ridiculous extent the dignity which seemed to her the fitting appanage of a wife, and Augustine, often as she had laughed at it, could not entirely refrain from slightly imitating her mother's prudery. This exaggerated modesty, which virtuous women do not always escape, gave rise to certain epigrams, in the shape of sketches, the gentle satire of which was too much in accordance with the dictates of good taste to give serious annoyance to De Sommervieux. Had they been far more severe, they would have been merely reprisals inflicted on him by his friends. But nothing could be trivial to a mind so susceptible to foreign impressions as Theodore's, and thus a certain coolness gradually stole over him which could not fail to grow. Connubial felicity is, as it were, situated on the level but narrow summit of a hill, close to which lies a steep and slippery decline, and the painter's passion was now descending it. He deemed his wife incapable of appreciating the moral considerations, which, in his own eyes,

justified the peculiarity of his conduct towards her, and held himself clear of all blame in concealing from her, ideas which she could not understand, and escapades which he held to be beyond the cognizance of the tribunal of a bourgeois conscience. Augustine cloistered herself in calm and silent sorrow. These unexpressed feelings established between the husband and the wife a veil which was doomed to grow thicker day by day. Augustine's husband was not wanting in politeness towards her; but she could not observe without a shudder that he reserved for the world those treasures of wit and grace which he formerly laid at her feet. She very soon began to give the most ominous interpretation to those smart sayings as to the inconstancy of men, in which society indulges. She did not give vent to any reproaches, but the attitude which she assumed amounted to a reproach.

Three years after marriage this pretty young woman, who drove by so brilliant in her brilliant carriage, who was living in an environment of glory and of wealth which made her an object of envy to many

thoughtless and undiscriminating persons, was a prey to violent grief. Her colour faded; she reflected, she compared; then she read by the light of misfortune the first texts of experience. She resolved bravely to confine herself within the circle of her duties, hoping that her generous conduct would sooner or later win back her husband's love. But it was not so. When Sommervieux exhausted with labour left his studio, Augustine did not manage to hide her work so speedily, but that the painter could see that his wife was mending all the house-linen and her own, with all the minute attention of a good house-wife. She would produce generously and without a murmur the money necessary to her husband's profusion; but actuated by a desire to spare the fortune of her dear Theodore, she exhibited a spirit of economy as regarded herself and certain details of the domestic administration. Such conduct is incompatible with the free and easy method of artists, who, when their career terminates in ruin, have so thoroughly enjoyed existence that they never inquire into the cause of that ruin. It is useless to depict every shade of degradation of

colour as it invaded and finally involved in profound obscurity the brilliant tints of the honeymoon. One evening the melancholy Augustine who, for some time past, had heard her husband speaking in enthusiastic language of the Duchess of Carigliano, received from a female friend certain mischievously charitable hints as to the nature of De Sommervieux's attachment to that renowned coquette of the imperial court. Augustine, who was only twenty-one and in the full bloom of youth and beauty, found herself betrayed for the sake of a woman of thirty-six. Feeling herself miserable in the midst of the world and its festivities, which were deserts to her, the poor girl lost all consciousness of the admiration, and the envy which she excited. Her face assumed a new expression. Melancholy shed upon her features the resignation and the pallor of neglected love. The most seductive men did not long delay to pay their court to her; but she remained solitary and virtuous. Certain contemptuous phrases uttered by her husband filled her with incredible despair. A sinister light revealed to her the defective contact which, result-

ing from the narrowness of her education, prevented the perfect union of her mind with that of Theodore. She loved so well, that she acquitted him and condemned herself. She wept tears of blood; she discovered all too late that there are unequal marriages in mind as well as in rank and manners. When she reflected on the vernal ecstasies of her union, she measured the extent of her vanished happiness and came to the conviction that so rich a harvest of love was equivalent to a whole life, and could be purchased only by compensating misery. Nevertheless she loved too sincerely to lose all hope; and so, at the age of twenty-one, she began to educate herself and to raise her imagination to a level worthy of that which she admired so much. "If I am not a poet," she said to herself, "I will at least understand poetry." And then putting forth that force of will, that energy which all women possess when they love, Madame de Sommervieux endeavoured to change her disposition, manners, and habits. But the only result of her voracious reading and courageous application was that she became less

ignorant: nimble wit and graceful conversation are gifts of nature, or else the fruit of training begun in the cradle. She could appreciate music and enjoy it, but she could not sing with taste. She could understand literature and the beauties of poetry, but it was too late to fix them in her rebel memory. She listened with pleasure to the chit-chat of the world, but could not contribute to its brilliance. Her religious views and the prejudices of her childhood clung to her and prevented the complete emancipation of her intellect. In short a foregone conclusion to her disadvantage had stealthily established itself in Theodore's mind, and she could not dislodge it. The artist laughed at those who spoke the praises of his wife to him, and his mockery was not without foundation; he was so much an object of reverence to the young and interesting creature, that she trembled when she was in his presence and when she was alone with him. Embarrassed by her excessive anxiety to give satisfaction, she felt her wit and learning swallowed up in one overwhelming feeling. The very fidelity of Augustine displeased the faithless

husband, who seemed to invite her to go astray by terming her chastity constitutional frigidity. It was in vain that Augustine put force upon herself to abdicate her reason, to bow to the whims and caprices of her husband, and sacrifice herself to the egotism of his vanity; she did not gather the fruit of her sacrifices. It might be that they had both allowed the moment favourable to a complete mutual understanding to glide away. On one particular day the over-sensitive heart of the young wife received one of those blows which so completely loosen the bonds of feeling that they seem to be broken. She shut herself up; but soon the fatal idea suggested itself, to go and seek consolation and counsel in the bosom of her family.

One morning then, she directed her steps to the grotesque façade of the homely and silent house in which the days of her childhood had been spent. She sighed as she caught sight once more of the window, from which she had one day kissed her hand to him who was now surrounding her existence with glory and with sorrow.

All was unchanged in the cave in which nevertheless the cloth trade was renewing its youth. Augustine's sister occupied her mother's seat at the old counter. The youthful mourner found her brother-in-law with his pen stuck behind his ear and so busy that he hardly listened to her. He was surrounded by the formidable symptoms of a general stock-taking, and begging to be excused, he left her to herself. Her sister received her with a coolness which betrayed a certain grudge; for in fact Augustine had never been to see her sister except when, elegantly dressed, she would leave her well appointed carriage to pay her a passing visit; so the wife of the prudent Lebas fancied that money was the real cause of this early call, and she accordingly endeavoured to maintain a tone of reserve which more than once made Augustine smile. The wife of the artist perceived that, barring the weepers on the cap, her mother had found in Virginie a successor who preserved the old-standing reputation of the Chat-qui-pelote. During lunch she noticed certain alterations in the household regulations

which did honour to the good sense of Joseph Lebas; the clerks did not leave the table at dessert; they enjoyed freedom of speech; while the abundant fare spoke of affluence without luxury. The elegant young woman noticed the counterfoils of a box at the Théâtre Français, where she remembered to have seen her sister from time to time. Madame Lebas wore upon her shoulders a Cashmere shawl whose magnificence bore witness to the generous attention bestowed on her by her husband. In short the worthy couple advanced with the age. A tender melancholy took possession of Augustine's mind as she observed during the two-thirds of the day which she spent at her sister's, the even happiness of the well assorted pair. It had no transports, but then it had no storms. They had accepted life as a commercial enterprise, the leading principle of which was the due conduct of their business. Virginie had not found in her husband an ardent affection; so she set to work to create one. Joseph Lebas was led by imperceptible degrees, first to esteem and then to love his wife, and the time which elapsed ere

the flower of happiness bloomed was a security for its permanence. Accordingly when the querulous Augustine explained her painful predicament, she had to endure a deluge of commonplaces suggested to her sister by the stock morality of the Rue St. Denis.

"The evil is done, wife," said Joseph Lebas, "our duty is to give our sister sound advice."

Then the skilful tradesman proceeded to a weighty analysis of the expedients which law and the usages of society afforded Augustine as means of extricating herself from the existing crisis. He ticked off, so to speak, the various considerations, and arranged them according to their weight, in categories; just as if he were dealing with goods of different qualities. Then he put them in the balance, weighed them, and wound up by demonstrating that it was incumbent on his sister to take decisive action. Now this did not accord with the affection which Augustine still entertained for her husband, and so when she heard Lebas talking of legal measures, that feeling awoke in all its strength.

She thanked her two friends and returned home, still more doubtful how to act than before she consulted them. Then she ventured to wend her way to the old-fashioned house in the Rue du Colombier, with a view to confiding her misfortunes to her father and mother; for she now resembled those desperate invalids who will try any prescription, and surrender themselves even to the nostrums of old women. The aged couple received their daughter with an effusive kindness which deeply affected her. Her visit formed a break in the monotony of their existence which was invaluable to them. For four years they had lived like mariners without a destination and without a compass. Seated in the chimney-corner they would chat to one another about the disasters of the *maximum*, their bygone purchases of cloth, their skilful avoidance of bankruptcies, and especially that celebrated Lecocq failure, which was father Guillaume's battle of Marengo. Then, having exhausted their old law-suits, they would recapitulate the totals of their most productive stock-takings, and narrate once more the old

stories of the Quartier St. Denis. When two o'clock came daddy Guillaume would set out, just to catch a glimpse of the progress of affairs at the Chat-qui-pelote. As he made his way back he would stop at all the shops which had formerly been his rivals; while the young proprietors would endeavour to involve the old tradesman in some risky discount transaction which, according to his inveterate habit he never positively declined. Two stout Normandy horses were dying of mesenteritis in the stable, for Madame Guillaume never used them, except when, as each Sunday came round, they dragged her to high mass at the parish church. Three times a week the worthy couple kept open house. Thanks to the influence of his son-in-law Sommervieux, father Guillaume had been appointed a member of the consulting committee for the clothing of the troops; and since the elevation of her husband to that important government appointment, Madame Guillaume had made up her mind to give entertainments, and her rooms were encumbered with so many ornaments in gold and silver, and tasteless but expensive

furniture, that the least sumptuous apartment looked like a chapel. Economy and prodigality seemed to be at feud with one another in every detail of the establishment. One would have said that M. Guillaume had been thinking of making a profitable investment even in the purchase of a candlestick.

In the midst of this bazaar, whose fertility proved the leisure of the worthy pair, De Sommervieux's famous picture held the place of honour and afforded great consolation to M. and Madame Guillaume, who twenty times in the course of the day would turn their spectacled gaze to that delineation of the old existence which had been so replete with activity and amusement for them. The aspect of the house and of the apartments, redolent as they were of age and mediocrity, and the spectacle presented by the two inmates who seemed, as it were, cast upon a rock, far from the world and its vitalizing thoughts, struck Augustine with surprise. She now saw the second part of the tableau, the first part of which she had witnessed in the dwelling of Joseph Lebas. Here was

an existence busy yet stationary—a life guided, like that of the beaver, by a mechanical instinct. Under the influence of this reflection she took a sort of pride in her sorrows as she thought that they had their source in eighteen months of happiness which were worth a thousand such lives as that which she saw before her in all its horrible emptiness. However, Augustine concealed the uncharitable thought and displayed for the benefit of her aged parents, the novel charms of her intellect and the seductive tenderness which love had taught her. Thus she disposed them to lend a favourable ear to her matrimonial troubles. Old people have a weakness for confidential communications of the kind. Madame Guillaume wanted to learn the most trivial details of the strange existence which was almost fabulous to *her*. The travels of Baron de la Houtau, which she was always taking up without ever reading it through, contained nothing more unheard-of, about the savages of Canada.

"What, child, do you mean to tell me that your husband shuts himself in with

naked women? and are you simple enough to believe that he draws them?"

And with this ejaculation the grandmother laid her spectacles on a little work-table, shook her petticoats, and placed her folded hands on her knees, raised above their natural level by a foot-warmer, her favourite foot-stool.

"But, mother, all artists are obliged to have models."

"He took good care to say nothing to us about that, when he proposed. If I had known it, I would not have given a girl of mine to a man who pursues such a calling. Religion prohibits such dreadful practices. It's immoral. What time do you say he comes home?"

"Oh, one or two o'clock."

The old folks looked at one another in deep amazement.

"Then he gambles," said M. Guillaume. "In my day only gamblers stayed out so late."

Augustine made a slight grimace in repulse of this accusation.

"He must cause you to pass fearful nights sitting up for him," resumed Ma-

dame Guillaume. "But no, you go to bed, don't you? And when he has lost money the monster wakes you up."

"No, mother, on the contrary, he is often in excellent spirits. Very often when it is fine he asks me to get up and go with him to the parks."

"To the parks at that time in the morning? You must be very much cramped for space if he hasn't room enough in his bed-room and drawing-rooms, and must needs scamper about,—but it must be to make you catch cold that the villain asks you to join in such excursions; he wants to be rid of you, depend upon it. Did you ever hear of a married man in a snug business galloping about like a man-wolf?"

"But, mother, you don't understand that in order to develope his talents he requires excitement. He is very fond of scenes which—"

"Scenes—I'd show him some scenes, trust me," cried Madame Guillaume, interrupting her daughter. "How can you at all bear with a man like that? In the first place, I don't like his drinking nothing

but water. It isn't wholesome. Then, why does he dislike to see women eating? What a queer notion, why he must be mad. What you have told us about him is impossible. A man *can't* leave his house without saying a word to anybody, and stay away ten days. He tells you he has been at Dieppe to paint the sea. Do people ever paint the sea? Why he crams you with children's stories."

Augustine opened her mouth to defend her husband, but Madame Guillaume motioned her to hold her tongue with a gesture to which early habit lent authority, and then proceeded in a dry tone of voice,—

"Stop, don't talk to me about the man. He never set his foot inside a church except to look at you and to marry you. Irreligious people are capable of anything. Do you suppose that Guillaume ever took it into his head to hide anything from me, to go three days together without even opening his lips, and then begin to chatter like a one-eyed magpie?"

"My dear mother, you are too hard upon superior people. If their ideas re-

sembled those of other people, we should have no talented people at all."

"Well, then, let men of talent keep to themselves, and live single. What? things are come to a pretty pass if a man of talent is to make his wife miserable because he is a man of talent. Talent! talent! I don't see much talent in perpetually talking black and white, interrupting people, blowing one's own trumpet, never letting one know what to be at, compelling a woman to abstain from enjoying herself until my gentleman's spirits look up, and to be gloomy because he is gloomy."

"But, mother, the peculiarity of imagination is—"

"What sort of imaginations are they, I should like to know," resumed Madame Guillaume, again interrupting her daughter. "There seem to be some fine ones indeed. What sort of a man is he who suddenly takes it into his head, without consulting a doctor, to eat nothing but vegetables? If he did it from religious motives, well and good; his abstinence might be of some use to him; but he has no more

religion than a Huguenot. Did ever any one hear of a man caring more, as he does, for horses than for his neighbour, getting his hair curled like a pagan, wrapping statues in muslin, and closing shutters in the daytime to work by lamplight? No, really if he were not so flagrantly immoral, he ought to be sent to the Petite-Maison. Consult Monsieur Loraux, the vicar of St. Sulpice; take his advice upon the whole matter, and he will tell you that your husband's conduct is not that of a Christian."

"Oh, mother, can you believe—"

"Oh, yes, I do believe! You loved him and don't observe these things. But for my part I remember having met him in the Champs-Elysées very shortly after his marriage. He was on horseback. Well, at one time he would start off at full gallop, and then the next he would stop and go at a snail's pace; I said to myself then, 'That man wants judgment.'"

"Ah!" exclaimed M. Guillaume, rubbing his hands, "it was well I had your fortune settled to your separate use when I let you marry such a queer character."

When Augustine had the imprudence to relate the real grievances which she had against her husband, the two old folks were struck dumb with indignation. The word divorce soon fell from the lips of Madame Guillaume and aroused the retired old tradesman.

Spurred by the love which he entertained for his daughter as well as by the excitement which a legal process would impart to his eventless life, father Guillaume spoke up. He assumed the lead and conduct of the divorce suit, began almost to plead it, offered his daughter to pay all the costs, to see the judges, attorneys, and advocates, and to move heaven and earth.

Madame de Sommervieux became alarmed, declined her father's services, declared that she would not be separated from her husband, even if she was to be rendered ten times more unhappy; and said no more about her troubles. After being loaded by her parents with all those little attentions and unspoken consolations by which the two old people vainly endeavoured to soothe the sorrows of her heart, Augustine withdrew, feeling the impossibility of getting ordinary

minds to form a just estimate of superior beings. She found that a woman must conceal from every one, even from her parents, misfortunes for which it is so difficult to enlist sympathy. The storms and troubles of superior spheres can only be appreciated by the lofty spirits which inhabit them. In every crisis we can be judged only by our peers.

So poor Augustine found herself once more in the chilling atmosphere of home, abandoned to her own terrible reflections.

Study was nothing to her now, since it had failed to win back her husband's heart. Initiated into the secrets of those fiery souls, but not possessing their resources, she was condemned to share their pains without partaking of their pleasures. She had contracted a distaste for the world, which seemed to her mean and paltry in the presence of the grand catastrophes of passion. In short, her life was a failure.

One evening an idea flashed across her mind, and lighted up as with some celestial ray, her sombre sorrows.

Such an idea could have commended

itself only to a heart so pure and virtuous as Augustine's. She made up her mind to go to the Duchess of Carigliano, not to ask her to restore her husband's heart, but to learn the artifices by which he had been torn away from her; to excite in the haughty woman of the world an interest in the mother of her lover's children; to work upon her feelings and make her the accomplice of her future happiness, as she was then the instrument of her present misfortunes.

And so it one day came to pass that the timid Augustine, armed with supernatural courage, took her seat in her carriage at two o'clock in the afternoon, to make her way to the boudoir of the celebrated coquette, who was never visible at an earlier hour. Madame de Sommervieux was as yet unacquainted with the old-fashioned sumptuous houses of the Faubourg St. Germain. As she traversed the majestic vestibules, the spacious staircases, the vast saloons adorned with flowers in the depth of winter, and furnished in that good taste which is peculiar to women to whom opulence and habits of aristocratic distinction

are familiar from the cradle, she felt a painful tightness at the heart. She was envious of the secrets of that elegance of which she had never had a notion. She breathed an atmosphere of grandeur which revealed the charm which that house exercised upon her husband. When she reached the private apartments of the duchess, the voluptuous arrangement of the furniture, of the drapery and the hangings filled her with jealousy and a feeling of despair. There, even disorder was graceful and luxury itself seemed imbued with a species of contempt for wealth. The perfumes that reigned in the mild atmosphere of the apartments gratified without irritating the sense of smell. The accessories of the chamber harmonized with the view of grassplat and evergreen that met the eye through the transparent windows. The whole aspect of the place was seductive, and yet there was no evidence of artifice throughout. The very spirit of the owner of these apartments could be traced in the drawing-room in which Augustine had to wait. She sought to gain some idea of the disposition of her rival from the scattered

objects that lay before her; but there was something in the disorder, there was something in the very symmetry, that was impenetrable to Augustine, something which was undecypherable to her simplicity; all that she could perceive was that the duchess as a woman was a superior woman. And then there occurred to her this painful thought: "Ah me! can it be true that a fond and simple heart is not sufficient for an artist; must his strong mind be joined by way of counterpoise, to a female heart as potent as his own? Had I been educated as this siren was, our weapons would at least have been equal when the contest began."

"But I am not at home." Such were the few harsh words, which, though uttered in a low voice in the adjoining room, Augustine overheard. They set her heart a-beating.

"But the lady is there," answered the lady's maid.

"You must have lost your wits. Show her in," replied the duchess in a voice which had now lost its harshness and assumed the soft accent of politeness. *Now*

it was clear that she meant that what she said should be overheard.

Augustine stepped timidly forward and saw the duchess indolently reclining on a brown velvet ottoman at the end of the boudoir. The ottoman was placed in the centre of a sort of semicircle formed by soft folds of muslin which covered some yellow material. Ornaments of gilded bronze artistically arranged gave a heightened tone to this kind of dais, under which the duchess lay like some antique statue. The deep-coloured velvet brought into full play everything that could add to the effect. The subdued light, favourable to her beauty, seemed to be reflected rather than direct. A few choice flowers raised their scented blossoms from vases of the richest Sèvres. Just as this tableau met the eye of the astonished Augustine, she caught, so noiseless had been her approach, a glance cast by the enchantress. This glance seemed to say to a person, whom the artist's wife had not at first observed, "Don't go, you will see a pretty woman and render her visit less tiresome to me."

At sight of Augustine the duchess rose

and made her sit down beside her. Then with a charming smile she inquired,—

"To what am I indebted for this agreeable visit, madame?"

Why such duplicity? thought Augustine, who only answered with a bow.

Her silence was enforced. The young wife saw before her an observer of the scene who was entirely *de trop*. This person was the youngest, the most elegant, and the best built of all the colonels of the imperial army. His half-dress uniform set off to the utmost advantage the graces of his person.

His face, which beamed with life and youth, and was already full of expression, derived further animation from the small moustaches turned up and drawn out into a point and black as jet; from the thick imperial, carefully combed whiskers, and the forest of black hair now considerably disarranged. He was playing with a whip and wore an air of ease and freedom which suited the self-satisfied aspect of his features and the neatness of his dress. The ribands attached to his buttonhole were negligently tied and he seemed much vainer of his handsome figure than of his courage.

Augustine looked from the duchess to the colonel with a glance whose petition was thoroughly comprehended.

"Well, good-bye, M. d'Aiglemont, we shall meet again at the Bois de Boulogne."

These words were uttered by the duchess as if they were the result of an understanding arrived at previously to Augustine's arrival; and they were accompanied by a threatening look which the young officer perhaps deserved, on account of his evident admiration for the modest flower of beauty who contrasted so well with the haughty duchess. The young fop bowed silently, turned on his heel, and walked gracefully out of the boudoir. At that moment, Augustine, who was watching her rival as she pursued with her eyes the dashing officer, detected in the glance a trace of that feeling whose fugitive expressions are known to every woman. She thought with the profoundest sorrow that her visit would be thrown away; the crafty duchess was too eager for homage to be merciful.

"Madame," said Augustine, in a broken voice, "the step which I am now taking in coming to you will seem to you very

extraordinary ; but the madness of despair ought to excuse everything. I now understand too well why Theodore prefers your house to any other, and why your mind exercises so great an influence over his. Alas, I have only to look into my own breast to discover reasons more than enough. But, madame, I adore my husband. Two years of sorrow have not erased his image from my heart, though he is lost to me. In my madness I have dared to entertain the idea of measuring myself with you, and I have come to see how I can triumph over you. Oh, madame!" exclaimed the young wife, eagerly seizing the hand which her rival abandoned to her, "I shall never pray to God for my own happiness with such fervour as I will entreat Him for yours, if you will aid me to regain, I do not say the love, but merely the friendship of Sommervieux. My only hope is in you. Oh, tell me how you won his heart, and made him forgetful of the first days of—"

At these words Augustine was forced to stop, choked with the sobs which she could not restrain : ashamed of her weakness she

hid her face in her handkerchief, which was soon deluged with her tears.

"Why what a child you are, my little beauty," said the duchess, for whom the novelty of the scene had a certain charm, and who was touched in spite of herself by the homage paid to her by perhaps the most spotless woman in Paris. So saying she took Augustine's handkerchief, and began to wipe her eyes with it, accompanying the process with sundry monosyllabic murmurs of graceful pity. After a moment's silence the coquette, imprisoning poor Augustine's pretty hands in her own, which were specially remarkable for their beauty and their power, said in a gentle and affectionate tone,—

"My first advice to you is not to cry so; crying makes people ugly. You must make short work with troubles which cause illness, for love cannot long survive a sick-bed. True it is that melancholy lends at first a certain engaging charm, but in the long-run it draws the features, and withers the most charming face; and then our tyrants are so vain that they want their poor slaves to be always gay."

"Ah, madame, I cannot control my feelings. How is it possible without experiencing a thousand deaths to see a face once radiant with love and joy, gloomy, pale, indifferent? Oh, I cannot command my feelings."

"So much the worse, my darling, but I believe I already know your whole story. In the first place make sure of this; if your husband has been faithless to you, *I* am not his accomplice. If I made it a point to have him at my receptions, it was, I freely admit, from mere vanity; he was famous and went nowhere. I like you already too well to give you a list of the follies he has been guilty of on my account. I will merely show you one of them, because it will perhaps help us to restore him to you, and to punish him for the audacity of his proceedings as far as I am concerned. If he went on he would compromise me. I know the world too well, my dear, to be willing to place myself at the mercy of a man of very great talent. To allow them to pay their addresses to us is very well, but as to marrying them, that is a mistake. We women may admire men of genius,

enjoy them as we do a spectacle, but as for living with them; oh, never. Why 'tis like seeking amusement by looking at the machinery behind the stage of the opera, instead of sticking to one's box and enjoying the brilliant illusions. But in your case, my poor child, the mischief is done, is it not? Well, then, we must try to furnish you with weapons against tyranny."

"Oh, madame, before I came into this room and saw you, I already recognized certain artifices which I did not suspect."

"Well, come and see me occasionally and you will very soon have the secret of these trifles, which by the way are very important trifles. External objects are for fools, the full half of existence; and in that respect more than one man of talent is a fool in spite of all his art. But I will take on me to say, that you have never let Theodore know what a refusal is."

"How, madame, can one refuse anything to the man one loves?"

"You innocent little creature, I could dote on you for your silliness. Learn this; the more we love the more should we endeavour to conceal the strength of our passion

from the man we love. It is the one who loves most who is trampled on and, what is worse, deserted, sooner or later. He who would reign must—"

"What, madame, must one then dissimulate, calculate, become false, create for one self an artificial character and maintain it? Oh, how can one live so? Can you . . .?"

She hesitated; the duchess smiled.

"My dear," resumed the great lady in a serious voice, "conjugal happiness has been at all times a speculation, a matter of business. If you persist in talking passion, when I am talking marriage, we shall very soon fail to understand each other. Listen to me," she continued with a confidential air. "I have been in a position to observe some of the most eminent men of this age. Those who have married, have, with few exceptions, married commonplace women. Well, those women governed them as the emperor governs us, and were, if not loved, at least respected by their husbands. I am sufficiently fond of secrets, especially of those which concern us women, to have taken a pleasure in finding the solution of

this enigma. Well, my angel, these good women had the faculty of analyzing the characters of their husbands. Without being alarmed, like you, at the superiority of their husbands, they adroitly noticed in what qualities they were deficient; and whether it was that the wives possessed those qualities, or only pretended to possess them, they managed to make such a display of them in the eyes of their husbands that in the end they inspired respect. Lastly, remember that these minds which seem so lofty are all slightly infected with madness, of which we ought to know how to take advantage. By making up our minds to get the upperhand of them, by sticking to that one object and in the midst of all our actions, thoughts, and coquetries, keeping it steadily in view, we subdue these eminently capricious spirits; the very mobility of their ideas furnishes us with the means of influencing them."

"Oh, heavens," cried the young wife in terror. "This then is life. It's a combat."

"Yes, a combat in which you must be always threatening an attack," resumed

the duchess with a laugh. "Our power is altogether factitious. So we must never allow a man to despise us; to recover from such a fall one must resort to odious manœuvres. Come with me," she added. "I am going to give you the means of binding your husband."

She rose and laughingly conducted the young and innocent apprentice to the tricks of matrimony, through the mazes of her little palace. They reached a private staircase which led to the reception-rooms. As the duchess was turning the handle of the door, she stopped, looked at Augustine with an inimitable air of subtilty and grace, and said, "Look here, the Duke de Carigliano worships me; well, he dare not come in by this door without my permission. And he is a man who is accustomed to command thousands of soldiers. He can assail a battery, but in my presence—he is afraid."

Augustine sighed. They reached a splendid gallery, and there the duchess led the painter's wife to the portrait which Theodore had painted of Mademoiselle Guillaume. When Augustine caught sight of it she shrieked.

"I knew well it was no longer in my house," said she, "but—here!"

"My little darling, I merely demanded it in order to learn of what folly a man of genius may be guilty. Sooner or later I should have returned it to you, for I did not look forward to the pleasure of seeing the original here, before the copy. While we finish our chat, I will have it taken to your carriage. If, armed with this talisman you are not your husband's mistress for a hundred years, you are not a woman, and you will deserve your fate."

Augustine kissed the hand of the duchess, who pressed her to her heart, and embraced her with a tenderness all the more lively because she would be forgotten on the morrow. This scene would perhaps have destroyed for ever the candour and purity of Augustine, to whom the secrets revealed by the duchess might do as much harm as good; for the astute policy of the loftiest social sphere, did not commend itself to Augustine, any more than the narrow common sense of Joseph Lebas, or the stupid morality of Madame Guillaume. Strange result of the false posi-

tions into which we are thrown by the least blunders committed in life! Augustine was like some Alpine shepherd overtaken by an avalanche; if he hesitates or listens to the cries of his companions, he generally perishes. In these grand crises the heart is broken or is bronzed. Madame de Sommervieux went home in a fit of agitation which it would be difficult to describe. Her conversation with the Duchess of Carigliano awakened in her breast a thousand conflicting ideas. Like the sheep in the fable, full of boldness when the wolf is away, she harangued herself and traced out for herself admirable plans of conduct: she invented a thousand schemes of coquetry, she even addressed her husband, discovering, in his absence, all the resources of that genuine eloquence which never deserts women; and then as she thought of the clear and steady gaze of Theodore, she began to tremble, even in his absence.

When she asked whether her husband was at home her voice failed her. When she heard that he would not come back to dinner she felt an inexplicable sensation of

delight. She resembled the criminal who appeals from his death sentence; a delay, however brief, seems like a whole lifetime. She placed the portrait in her own room, and waited for her husband in all the agonies of hope. She felt so sure that this attempt of hers would be decisive of her whole future, that she trembled at every noise, even at the ticking of her time-piece, which seemed to add weight to her terrors by measuring them. She tried to while away the time by a thousand devices. She took it into her head to dress herself just as she was dressed in the portrait. Then, conscious of the restlessness of her husband's disposition, she caused her room to be lighted up with unaccustomed brilliancy, feeling sure that inquisitiveness would attract her husband to her chamber on his return. It was striking twelve when at the sound of the postilion's voice, the gate of the hotel flew open, and the artist's carriage rolled over the pavement of the silent courtyard.

"What is the meaning of this illumination?" asked Theodore in a gay tone, as he entered his wife's room.

Augustine adroitly seized the propitious moment, threw her arm round her husband's neck and pointed to the portrait. The artist stood motionless as a rock and turned his eyes now on Augustine, and now on the accusing toilette. The timid wife, half dead with fear, who was watching the changing, the awe-inspiring brow of her husband, saw its expressive lines mass by degrees like clouds. Then she fancied she could feel the blood freezing in her veins, as with flaring eye and deep and hollow voice he asked,—

"Where did you find that picture?"

"The Duchess de Carigliano restored it to me."

"Did you ask her for it?"

"I did not even know she had it."

The sweetness, nay the enchanting melody of the voice of such an angel, would have softened the heart of a cannibal, but not that of an artist suffering from the tortures of wounded vanity.

"That is an act well worthy of her," cried the painter in a voice of thunder. "I will revenge myself," he added, striding about the room. "She shall die dis-

graced for having done this; I will paint her, yes, I will represent her in the character of Messalina stealing by night from the palace of Claudius."

"Theodore!" exclaimed a dying voice.

"I will murder her."

"My friend."

"She is in love with that little cavalry colonel, because he is a good horseman."

"Theodore."

"Oh, leave me," said the painter to his wife, in a voice which resembled a roar.

It would be odious to describe the whole of this scene, towards the end of which the intoxication of anger drove the painter to language and gestures which an older woman than Augustine would have attributed to phrenzy. About eight o'clock the next morning, Madame Guillaume, breaking in upon her daughter, found her pale, red-eyed, and with dishevelled hair, holding in her hand a handkerchief drenched with tears, and gazing at the fragments of a tattered dress and a large gilt picture-frame that lay scattered on the floor. Augustine, who was almost mad

with grief, pointed to the wreck with a gesture of despair.

"Ah, it may be a very serious loss," cried the old regent of the Chat-qui-pelote. "It was certainly very like you; but I have heard of a man on the boulevards who paints charming portraits for 150 francs apiece."

"Oh, mother."

"My poor darling, you are quite right," answered Madame Guillaume, who misinterpreted the meaning of the look which her daughter cast at her. "Never mind, my child. No one can love so tenderly as a mother. I can understand it all, my darling; but come and tell me all your troubles, and I will comfort you. Have I not told you already that the man is mad. Your maid has told me some queer things about him. Why, he must be a regular monster."

Augustine placed her finger on her pale lips, as if to implore her mother to be silent for an instant. During that terrible night, misfortune had taught her that patient resignation, which seems, in the case of mothers and of women who love, to

transcend the limits of human strength, and shows, perhaps, that there are certain chords in the female heart which God has denied to men.

An inscription on a tombstone in the cemetery of Montmartre shows that Madame de Sommervieux died at the age of twenty-seven. In the simple lines of that epitaph, a friend of the timid creature recognizes the last scene of a tragedy. On the solemn festival of the 2nd of November in each year, that friend, as he passes the recent gravestone, asks himself the question, whether the powerful embrace of genius does not require women of a robuster type than poor Augustine?

"It may be," such is his internal reflection, "that these humble and modest flowers of the valley, perish when they are transplanted to a too elevated region, the sphere of gathering tempests and of scorching suns."

LA VENDETTA.

DEDICATED TO PUTTINATI, SCULPTOR, OF MILAN.

Towards the end of October in the year 1800, a foreigner accompanied by his wife and child arrived in front of the Tuileries, and planted himself for a considerable time near the *débris* of a house, then recently demolished, on the spot now occupied by the unfinished wing which was to connect the palace of Catherine de Medici with the Louvre of the Valois. There he remained with folded arms and bowed head, which he raised from time to time to look at the consular palace, and at his wife, who was seated near him on a stone. Although the female foreigner seemed to be confining her attention to the little girl of nine or ten, whose raven locks were as a plaything in her hands, she did not miss one of the looks which her companion directed to her. A single sentiment, other than love, united these two beings, and imparted the same uneasi-

ness to their movements and their thoughts. Poverty is perhaps the most potent of all bonds. The foreigner had one of those large, massive, hair-abounding heads which are so often to be met with in the paintings of the Caracci. His jet-black locks were interspersed with a large number of white hairs. His features, though noble and lofty, were marred by an air of harshness. In spite of his strength and upright figure, he seemed to be over sixty. The style of his much-worn garments showed that he came from a foreign land. Although the once handsome, but now faded, features of the woman bespoke a profound melancholy, yet when her husband looked at her she forced a smile and assumed an air of calmness. The young girl remained standing, though it was clear from the appearance of her youthful sun-burnt face that she was tired. Her features were of the Italian cast ; she had large black eyes shaded by strongly arched brows, a certain native nobility and genuine grace. Not a few of those who passed this group were moved at the mere sight of these three persons, who made no effort to conceal a despair,

which was as profound as its expression was simple. But the source of this transient kindness, which characterizes the Parisian, was soon exhausted; for so soon as the stranger saw that the attention of some idler was attracted to himself, he looked upon him with so fierce an air that the boldest flâneur quickened his step as if he had trodden on a serpent. After having remained for a long time in a state of indecision, the tall stranger suddenly passed his hand across his forehead, chased from it, so to speak, the thoughts which had gathered it into furrows, and evidently made up his mind to some desperate step. Casting a penetrating glance at his wife and daughter, he drew a long poniard from his bosom, held it out to his companion, and said to her in Italian, "I am going to see whether the Bonapartes remember us." Then he walked with a slow, firm step towards the entrance of the palace, where he was, as was to be expected, stopped by a soldier of the consular guard, with whom he was prevented from having a long discussion; for, perceiving the old man's persistence, the sentinel pointed his

bayonet at him by way of *ultimatum*. As chance would have it, the soldier upon guard was at that very moment relieved, and the corporal with great civility directed the foreigner to the spot where he would find the commandant of the station.

"Let Bonaparte know that Bartholoméo de Piombo wishes to speak to him," said the Italian to the captain on duty. It was all very well for the officer to represent to Bartholoméo that the first Consul was not to be seen unless a written request for an audience had been previously laid before him; the foreigner insisted that the soldier should carry the intimation to Bonaparte. The officer opposed him on the ground of the positive regulations, and formally declined to obey the order of this singular petitioner. Bartholoméo frowned, darted at the commandant a terrible look, and seemed to hold him responsible for the evils which might result from this refusal. Then, without another word, he folded his arms firmly across his chest and proceeded to take up his position under the portico, which serves for a communication between the court and the gardens of the Tuileries.

Persons who have a strong desire for anything are almost always well backed by chance. At the moment when Bartholoméo de Piombo sat down on one of the railings near the entrance to the Tuileries, a carriage drove up, and set down Lucien Bonaparte, then minister of the interior.

"Ah, Lucien, it is very lucky for me that I met you," cried the stranger.

These words, uttered in a Corsican patois, arrested Lucien at the moment when he was driving under the arch; he looked at his compatriot and recognized him. At the first word that Bartholoméo whispered to him, he took the Corsican with him. Murat, Lannes, and Rapp were in the first Consul's closet. On the entrance of Lucien followed by a man of so strange an appearance as Piombo's, the conversation ceased, Lucien took Napoleon's hand and led him into the embrasure of the window. After having exchanged a few words with his brother, the first Consul made a gesture with his hand, which Murat and Lannes obeyed by going away. Rapp pretended not to have observed it, in order that he might remain; but Bonaparte

spoke to his aide-de-camp peremptorily, whereupon he sullenly left the room. The first Consul, who heard the footsteps of Rapp in the next room, went out suddenly and found him close to the wall which separated the closet from the anteroom.

"You are determined not to understand me, then?" said the first Consul. "I want to be alone with my compatriot."

"A Corsican," replied the aide-de-camp. "I distrust those people too much not to—"

The first Consul could not refrain from smiling, and gave his faithful officer a slight push on the shoulder.

"Well, what have you come here for, my poor Bartholoméo?" said the first Consul to Piombo.

"To ask you for an asylum and for protection, if you are a true Corsican," answered Bartholoméo in a brusque tone.

"What misfortune has driven you from the country? you were the richest, the most—"

"I have killed all the Portas," said Piombo, in a deep voice and with a frown. The first Consul drew back two paces, as if astonished.

"Are you going to betray me?" cried Bartholoméo, scowling at Bonaparte. "Do you know that there are still four Piombos in Corsica?"

Lucien grasped his compatriot's arm and shook it, then said sharply,—

"Are you come hither to threaten the Saviour of France?"

Bonaparte made a sign to Lucien, who said no more; then looking at Piombo he said,—

"Why did you kill the Portas?"

"We had struck up a friendship," he answered," the Barbantis had reconciled us. On the morrow of the day on which we drowned our quarrels in a friendly cup, I left them, because I had business at Bastia. They remained at my house and set fire to my vineyard at Longuel; they killed my son Grégorio. But my wife and daughter, who had taken the sacrament that morning, and were under the special protection of the Virgin, escaped. When I returned I could not see my house; as I searched for it my feet were upon ashes. All at once I stumbled against the body of Grégorio which I recognized by the light

of the moon. 'Ah, the Portas have struck this blow,' I said to myself. I went forthwith into the mâquis. I there collected certain men to whom I had been of service: do you understand me, Bonaparte? and we marched to the vineyard of the Portas. We reached it at five o'clock in the morning and at seven they were all in the presence of God. Giacomo maintains that Elisa Vanni saved one child, the little Luigi, but I myself had tied him to his bed before I set fire to the house. I left the island with my wife and child without having been able to ascertain whether Luigi Porta still lived."

Bonaparte looked at Bartholoméo with curiosity but without surprise.

"How many were there of them?" asked Lucien.

"Seven," replied Piombo. "They persecuted you at one time," he added; but as these words caused no expression of hatred on the faces of the two brothers, Bartholoméo exclaimed with a sort of despairing accent, "Ah! you are no longer Corsicans; adieu! I protected you in days gone by," he added in a reproachful tone. "But for me, your mother would not have

reached Marseilles," said he, addressing Bonaparte, who was lost in thought, with his elbow leaning on the mantelpiece.

"In conscience, Piombo" replied Napoleon, "I cannot take you under my wing. I am become the chief of a great nation; I command the republic, and am bound to see that the laws are executed."

"Ah, ah," cried Bartholoméo.

"But I can shut my eyes," resumed Bonaparte. "The prejudice as to the Vendetta will for a long time obstruct the sovereignty of the laws in Corsica" he added, speaking to himself. "But it must be destroyed at any price."

Bonaparte was silent for a moment, and Lucien signalled to Piombo not to speak. The Corsican was already beginning to shake his head in token of disapprobation.

"Remain in Paris," resumed the first Consul, addressing Bartholoméo, "we shall know nothing about it. I will procure a purchaser for your estates, so that you may in the first place have something to live upon. Then later on, after the lapse of some little time, we will think of you. But no more Vendetta. There are

no Máquis here. If you use the poniard here, you must not hope for pardon. Here the law protects the citizens, and people don't take the law into their own hands."

"He has become the chief of a singular country," replied Bartholoméo, taking Lucien's hand and squeezing it. "But you acknowledge me in misfortune. Now I am yours in life and to the death, and you may dispose at your pleasure of all the Piombos."

As he said this the forehead of the Corsican grew smooth, and he looked around him with satisfaction.

"You are not badly lodged here," said he, smiling, as if he would like to live there. "And you are dressed all in red like a cardinal."

"It depends entirely on yourself to succeed and have a palace at Paris," said Bonaparte, examining his compatriot from head to foot. "It will happen to me more than once to look round me in search of a devoted friend in whom I can confide."

A sigh of joy escaped from the capacious chest of Piombo, who held out his hand to the first Consul, and said, "There is

still something of the Corsican left in you!"

Bonaparte smiled and gazed in silence at the man who might be said to bring with him Bonaparte's native air, the air of that isle in which he had formerly been so miraculously saved from the hatred of the English party, of that isle which he was destined never to see again. He made a sign to his brother, who led Bartholoméo di Piombo away. Lucien anxiously inquired about the financial situation of the ancient protector of their family. Piombo took the minister of the interior up to a window, pointed out his wife and Ginevra, both seated on a heap of stones, and said,—

"We have come hither from Fontainebleau on foot, and haven't a farthing."

Lucien gave his purse to his compatriot, and advised him to come the next day, in order to consult about the means of providing some support for his family. The value of all the property which Piombo owned in Corsica would scarcely enable him to live decently in Paris.

Fifteen years elapsed between the arrival

of the Piombo family in Paris, and the following adventure; which, without the recital of the preceding events, would have been less intelligible.

Servin, one of our most distinguished artists, was the first to conceive the idea of opening a studio for young girls desirous of taking lessons in painting. He was a man of forty, of pure morals, entirely devoted to his art, and had made a love-match with the daughter of a general who had no fortune. At first, mothers conducted their daughters to the professor in person, but subsequently, when they came to know his high principles and appreciate the pains he took to deserve their confidence, contented themselves with sending them. It had been part of the painter's plan to accept as scholars none but such as belonged to wealthy or highly respectable families; so as to avoid any criticism as to the constituent elements of his studio. He even declined to receive young girls who wanted to become artists by profession, to whom it would have been necessary to give certain instruction, without which talent in painting is impossible. Gradually his prudence the, superiority of his method

of initiating his pupils into the secrets of the art, the feeling of security arising from the character and morals of the artist, and the fact of his marriage, procured for him an excellent reputution in the drawing-rooms of Paris. When a young girl exhibited a desire to learn to paint or draw, and her mother wanted advice upon the subject, "Send her to Servin," was the answer made by every one. Hence Servin obtained in the matter of girl-teaching a speciality, as Herbault had for bonnets, Leroy for fashions, and Chevet for eatables. It was acknowledged that a young woman who had taken lessons from Servin could pronounce a conclusive opinion on the pictures at the museum, paint a portrait in superior style, copy a picture, and paint her picture of genre. Thus this artist supplied all the requirements of the aristocracy. But notwithstanding the connexions he had with the best families in Paris he was independent, he was a patriot, and maintained, no matter to whom he was talking, that gay, witty, sometimes comical tone, and that freedom of judgment which distinguishes painters.

He had extended his scrupulous pre-

cautions even to the arrangement of the place in which his scholars studied. The entrance to the attic which surmounted his dwelling had been walled up. In order to reach that retreat, which had all the sanctity of a harem, it was necessary to use a staircase which had been erected in the interior of the house. The studio, which occupied all the upper part of the house, was of those enormous dimensions which always surprise the curious, who, when they have climbed to a height of sixty feet from the ground, expect to find the artist lodged in a rain-spout. This species of gallery was profusely lighted by great windows fitted with those large green blinds, by means of which artists regulate the light. Caricatures, heads dashed off at a stroke, either in colour, or scratched with the point of a knife, crowded the dark grey walls and proved that, allowing for the different manner of expressing it, girls, even of the highest class, have as much folly in their composition as men can possibly have. A little stove with its large flues, which described a hideous zigzag ere they reached the regions

of the roof, was an inevitable ornament of this studio. Around the walls ran a wooden shelf, supporting plaster models, which lay scattered in confusion, being for the most part covered with light dust. Here and there, beneath this shelf, was to be seen hanging on a nail, a head of Niobe in her pose of grief, a smiling Venus, a hand thrust brusquely forward like that of a beggar asking for alms, and sundry *écorchés* embrowned with smoke and looking like limbs lately torn from their coffin. Paintings, sketches, mannikins, frames without pictures, and pictures without frames, completed the studio-like character of this disorderly apartment—a character which consists in an extraordinary mixture of ornament and nakedness, of poverty and richness, of care and neglect. This immense place, in which everything seems insignificant, even man, is suggestive of the back of a stage; and is full of old clothes, gilded armour, fragments of various stuffs and machines; but there is something about it great as thought; genius and death are there, the Diana or the Apollo, close to a skull or a skeleton; beauty and

disorder, romance and reality, rich colours in shadow, and, not unfrequently, a complete though mute and motionless drama. What a symbol of an artist's brain!

At the moment when this narrative begins, the brilliant July sun was lighting up the studio, and two rays of light shot through its whole length large transparent bands of gold, glittering with grains of dust. A dozen easels raised their pointed tops like ship-masts in a port. Several young girls with their various faces, attitudes, and dresses, gave life to the scene, while the green serges, so arranged as to suit the requirements of each easel, produced a number of contrasts and startling effects of clear-obscure. This group of girls was the prettiest picture in the studio. A fair young creature, very simply dressed, stood aloof from her companions and worked courageously as if forecasting misfortune. Not one of the girls looked at her or spoke to her; she was the prettiest, the most modest, and the poorest of them all.

Two principal groups, separated one from the other by a slight space, showed

that there were two societies and two spirits even in this studio, where the differences of rank and fortune ought to have been forgotten. Sitting or standing, these young girls, surrounded by their colour-boxes, playing with pencils or preparing them for use, handling their shining palettes, painting, laughing, singing, giving free play to their natural characters, and displaying their natural dispositions, constituted a spectacle not to be seen by men. Here a proud, haughty, capricious girl, with raven locks and beautiful hands, scattered carelessly her kindling glances; there, gay and heedless, with a smile upon her lips, stood a girl with chestnut hair and white delicate hands, the true French maiden, frivolous, unthinking, heedless of aught beyond the enjoyment of the passing day. There, again, was a girl, dreamy, melancholy, with pallid face, and head bent like a drooping flower; while her neighbour, on the other hand, was tall, indolent, inclined to oriental habits, and had a long, dark, humid eye. This one spoke seldom, but pondered and cast stolen glances at the head of Antinous. In the

midst of the girls, like the *jocoso* in a Spanish play, stood a girl who was full of wit and epigrammatic phrases, a girl who embraced all their movements at a single glance, made them all laugh and was perpetually looking up with a face too full of life not to be pretty. This girl was the leader of the first group, which consisted of the daughters of bankers, notaries, and merchants, all rich, yet all subjected to the intangible yet penetrating disdain lavished on them by the other young girls who belonged to the aristocracy. These were governed by the daughter of an officer of the royal household, a little creature equally vain and foolish, who was proud of being the daughter of a man who held an appointment at court. She wished to appear as if she grasped without any effort the observations of her master, and seemed to work as a matter of favour. She used an eye-glass, always came late, elaborately dressed, and entreated her companions to speak low. In this latter group might be seen exquisite figures and faces full of distinction; but the girls of this group lacked simplicity. Their postures were elegant,

and their movements graceful, but there was a want of frankness in their faces, and it was easily seen that they belonged to a world in which politeness gains an early hold upon the character and the abuse of social enjoyments kills the sentiments and developes egotism. But amongst the whole assembly were to be found childlike heads, maidens of exquisite purity, faces whose half-opened mouths disclosed virgin teeth, while virgin smiles played upon the lips. Under this aspect the studio did not look like a seraglio, but like a group of angels seated on a cloud.

It was now noon, and Servin had not yet shown himself. For some days past he had spent the greater part of his time at a studio of his, situated elsewhere, in which he was finishing a picture for the Exhibition. All at once Mademoiselle Amélie Thirion, the leader of the aristocrats of this little assembly, held a long conversation with her next neighbour. Then there was a dead silence in the patrician group, while the bank section also was silent in surprise, and endeavoured to guess the subject of such a conference. But the secret

of the young ultras was soon divulged. Amélie rose, and taking up an easel which stood some paces from her, replaced it at a considerable distance from the noble group, near a rough partition which separated the studio from a dark closet containing the broken casts, the paintings rejected by the professor, and a supply of firewood, in winter. This action of Amélie's evoked a murmur of astonishment, which did not however deter her from completing the removal by hastily rolling alongside of the easel, the box of colours, stool, &c., including a picture by Prudhon which the tardy pupil was copying. After this *coup d'état*, if the party of the right set itself silently to work, that of the left entered into a long debate.

"What will Mademoiselle Piombo say to that?" inquired a young girl of Mathilde Roguin, the mischievous oracle of the first group.

"She is not a girl to talk," replied Mathilde; "but fifty years hence she will remember this insult as if it had been offered to her only the day before, and will find a cruel vengeance. She is a person

with whom I should not like to have a feud."

"The proscription to which those young ladies are subjecting her is all the more unkind," said another young girl, "because Mademoiselle Ginevra was very sad the day before yesterday; it was said that her father had tendered his resignation. So that this will be an addition to her misfortune; and she was very good to those young ladies during the hundred days. Did she ever say a single word to them that could wound their feelings? On the contrary, she never mentioned politics. But our ultras seem to be acting from jealousy, rather than party-spirit."

"I feel inclined to go and get Mademoiselle Piombo's easel and place it next to mine," said Mathilde Roguin. She rose but sat down again as a thought occurred to her, which she expressed in these words. "We cannot tell how a person of Mademoiselle Ginevra's disposition might take our civility; let us await the event."

"Eccola," said the black-eyed girl languidly.

In fact the sound of the footsteps of a person coming up the staircase was heard in the studio. The words "Here she is," passed from mouth to mouth, and then the profoundest silence reigned throughout the room.

In order to explain the importance of the ostracism which Amélie Thirion had carried into effect, it is necessary to add that this scene took place towards the end of the month of July, 1815. The second return of the Bourbons had just disturbed many a friendship which had resisted the commotion produced by the first restoration. At this moment the schism between the different members of nearly every family caused a revival of those lamentable scenes which soil the history of every country during periods of civil or religious war. Children, girls, old men, all felt the monarchical fever which consumed the governing powers. Discord entered every dwelling and distrust stained with its sombre hues the most private actions and conversations. Ginevra Piombo loved, nay, idolized Napoleon; how could she hate him? The emperor was her father's fellow-country-

man and benefactor. The Baron de Piombo was one of those servants of Napoleon who co-operated most efficaciously in bringing about his return from the island of Elba. The old Baron de Piombo, who was not only incapable of renouncing his political creed, but even anxious to confess it, remained at Paris in the midst of his foes. Ginevra Piombo, therefore, was the more liable to be included in the number of suspected persons, in that she made no secret of the chagrin which the second restoration caused her family. Perhaps the only tears which she had ever shed were extorted from her by the double news of Napoleon's captivity on the "Bellerophon" and the arrest of Labédoyère. The young women composing the patrician group belonged to the highest royalist families in Paris. It would be difficult to give an idea of the over-excited feelings of the epoch, and of the horror in which the Bonapartists were held. Trifling and insignificant as the action of Amélie Thirion may now seem, it was then a very natural mode of expressing hatred. Ginevra Piombo, one of the earliest of Servin's pupils, had occu-

pied the place, of which it was desired to deprive her, since her first introduction to the studio; the aristocratic group had gradually formed itself around her; to expel her from a place, which in a certain sense belonged to her, was not only to offer her an insult, but to cause her a certain amount of actual trouble; for all artists have a preference for some particular spot to work in. But political dislike had perhaps little to do with the conduct of this small *côté droit* of the studio. Ginevra Piombo, as the cleverest of Servin's pupils, was the object of profound envy. The master professed an equal admiration for the talents and for the character of this favourite scholar, who served as the basis of all his comparisons. In short, though no explanation of the superiority which this young girl possessed over all who surrounded her was forthcoming, she enjoyed in that little world a prestige similar to that which Bonaparte had with his soldiers. The aristocracy of the studio had for several days past plotted the downfall of this queen; but no one having as yet ventured to draw away from the Bonapartist,

Mademoiselle Thirion had just taken a decisive step in order to make her companions the accomplices of her hate. Although Ginevra was sincerely loved by two or three of the royalists, who had nearly all been well schooled at home in the matter of politics, yet, with that tact which is peculiar to women, they deemed that they were bound to remain neutral in the strife. On Ginevra's arrival then, she was greeted with a profound silence. Of all the young girls who had up to that time frequented the studio of Servin, she was the most beautiful, the tallest, and the most finely formed. There was in her carriage a certain grace and nobility which commanded respect. Her face, which bore the imprint of intelligence, had a radiant look, so full was it of that animation which is peculiar to Corsicans, and not inconsistent with repose. Her long hair and black eyes and eyelashes betokened passion. Although the corners of the mouth were lightly touched, and her lips were somewhat too pronounced, there was stamped upon them that look of benevolence which the consciousness of strength gives to the strong. By a singu-

lar caprice of nature the charm of the countenance was, to a certain extent, destroyed by a marble forehead that was almost savage in its pride and eloquent of the morals of Corsica. *There* was to be seen the only bond which existed between her and her native land. Throughout the rest of her person the simplicity and ease of the belles of Lombardy exerted so much charm that it was impossible in her presence to cause her the least pain. So great was the attraction she exercised, that her father did not allow her to go to the studio without an attendant. The only defect of this truly poetical creature was the potency of a beauty so fully developed. She had declined all offers of marriage from love for her father and mother; she felt she was indispensable to them in their old age. Her taste for painting had taken the place of those passions to which women generally are subject.

"You are remarkably silent to-day, young ladies," she observed after having advanced a few steps among her companions. "Good-day, my little Laura," she added in a sweet caressing tone, as she

drew near to a young girl who was painting at a distance from the others. "That head is very good, the flesh is a little too ruddy, but the whole is admirably drawn." Laura raised her head and looked at Ginevra affectionately; and the faces of the two girls glowed with the expression of a mutual regard. A faint smile played upon the lips of the Italian girl. She seemed to be in a reflective mood, and moved slowly towards her place, glancing listlessly at the drawings and paintings, and bidding good-day to each of the girls of the first-mentioned group, without observing the unwonted curiosity excited by her presence. She looked like a queen surrounded by her court. She took no heed of the deep silence which reigned among the patricians, and passed in front of their camp without uttering a single word. So great was her preoccupation, that she took her seat at her easel, opened her colour-box, took up her brushes, put on her brown sleevelets, adjusted her apron, looked at her picture, and examined her palette without thinking, so to speak, of what she was doing. Every head in the plebeian group

was turned towards her, while the eyes of the young ladies who formed the Thirion camp were directed, with less frankness yet with equal fixity, to Ginevra.

"She does not notice the change at all," said Mademoiselle Roguin. But at that moment Ginevra threw off the meditative air which she had worn while contemplating her picture, and turned her head towards the group of aristocrats. She measured at a single glance the distance between it and herself, but said nothing. "She does not think that any insult was intended," said Mathilde. "She has neither blushed nor turned pale. How annoyed those young ladies will be if she finds her new place more to her liking than the old one." Then addressing Ginevra she exclaimed in a loud voice, "You are quite out of line there, mademoiselle." The Italian girl pretended not to hear; it may be that she really did not hear. She rose abruptly, walked somewhat slowly by the partition which separated the dark closet from the studio, and appeared to be examining the window whence the light came, seeming to attach so much importance to it that she

mounted upon a chair in order to raise the green serge which intercepted the light, a good deal higher. When upon the chair she was close to a slight chink in the partition, which was the real goal of her efforts; for the look she cast through the chink can be compared only to that of a miser discovering the treasures of Aladdin. She then speedily descended, went back to her place, readjusted her picture, pretended to be dissatisfied with the light, drew a table near to the partition, placed a chair upon it, then mounting upon that scaffolding, looked through the chink once more. It was but a single glance she threw into the closet, then lighted by a *jour de souffrance* which had been opened in it. What she saw in the closet produced so lively an emotion that she trembled. "You will fall, Mademoiselle Ginevra," cried Laura.

All the young people looked at the adventurous girl, who was reeling. The fear that her companions would come up to her, gave her courage; she regained her strength and equilibrium, and turning to Laura, and while swaying herself upon the chair, exclaimed in a voice of emotion,

"Bah! it is at least a little more solid than a throne." She then hurriedly removed the serge, got down, pushed the table and chair far away from the partition, returned to her easel, and made some further seeming efforts to obtain a suitable body of light. But she was not thinking about her picture; her real object was to get close to the dark closet, by the door of which she fixed her place as she desired. Then she set herself to get her palette ready, maintaining all the while the strictest silence.

Thus placed, she soon heard much more distinctly the gentle noise which on the previous evening had aroused her curiosity and led her youthful imagination through the vast field of conjecture. She readily recognized the strong, firm breathing of the sleeping man of whom she had caught a glimpse. Her curiosity was more than satisfied, but she found herself weighted with a grave responsibility. Through the chink she had caught sight of the imperial eagle, and the face of an officer of the guard, upon a dimly lighted folding-bed. All was now clear to her; Servin was hiding an outlaw. And now she began

to fear that one of her companions would come to look at her picture and hear the respiration of the poor fellow or some too deep-drawn inspiration, such as that which had reached her ear during the last lesson. She came to the resolution to remain near the door, trusting to her skill to defeat the accidents of fate.

"It will be better that I should be here to guard against some sinister occurrence, than leave the poor prisoner at the mercy of some bit of negligence." So she thought; and the thought explains the indifference displayed by Ginevra when she found her easel removed. She was secretly overjoyed at the incident; since it had afforded her the opportunity of satisfying her curiosity in the most natural manner; and moreover she was at that moment too preoccupied to seek for the reason of the removal of her seat.

Nothing is more annoying to young girls, and indeed to any one, than to see a bit of spite, an insult, or a smart sting, fail of its effect by reason of the indifference manifested by its object. It would seem that our hatred of a foe gains depth in pro-

portion to the height to which he rises above us. The conduct of Ginevra was an enigma to all her companions. Her friends and her enemies were equally surprised, for they gave her credit for every good quality except forgiveness of injuries. Although the events of her studio life had afforded few occasions for the display of that defect, the examples of vindictive feeling and of firmness which she had displayed, had not produced any the less effect on the minds of her companions. After many conjectures, Mademoiselle Roguin concluded by imputing the silence of the Italian girl to a magnanimity that was beyond all praise; and thereupon her retinue, inspired by her, entered into a scheme for humiliating the aristocrats of the studio. They achieved their object by means of a volley of sarcasms which lowered the pride of the *côté droit*. The arrival of Madame Servin put an end to this contest of vanity.

Amélie Thirion, with that cunning which always accompanies malice, had observed, analyzed, and reflected on, the prodigious preoccupation, which prevented Ginevra

from overhearing the bitter but polite dispute of which she was the object. Thus the retaliation inflicted by Mademoiselle Roguin and her companions had the fatal effect of inducing the young ultras to inquire into the reason of Ginevra's silence; so that the beautiful Italian became the centre to which every eye was directed, and was closely watched both by her friends and by her enemies. It is extremely difficult to conceal even the least emotion or the lightest feeling from fifteen young girls full of curiosity and idleness, whose love of mischief and whose intelligence are athirst for secrets to be discovered, and intrigues to be worked out or defeated, while their skill in putting a number of different interpretations upon a particular gesture, glance, or word, infallibly directs them to the right one. Accordingly the secret of Ginevra di Piombo was speedily in great danger of being found out. At that moment the presence of Madame Servin produced a break in the representation of the drama, which was being silently carried on in the depths of those young hearts; a drama whose sentiments, ideas, and progress

were expressed by means of phrases which were almost allegorical, by mischievous glances, by gestures, even by silence, which is sometimes more intelligible than language.

As soon as Madame Servin entered the studio, her eyes sought the door near which Ginevra had taken up her position. Under the existing circumstances, that look was not forgotten. If none of the pupils paid any attention to it at first, Mademoiselle Thirion afterwards recalled it, and interpreted the mistrust, the fear, and the mystery which almost glared in the eyes of Madame Servin.

"Mesdemoiselles," said she, "Monsieur Servin cannot be here to day."

Then she complimented the young ladies all round, and received from each of them a heap of those feminine caresses which lie as much in the voice and in the looks as in the actions. Governed by an uneasiness which she vainly endeavoured to disguise, she soon came to where Ginevra was sitting. The Italian girl and the painter's wife exchanged a friendly nod, but did not speak, while the one painted and the other looked on. The respiration of the soldier

could easily be heard, but Madame Servin seemed not to hear it, and so great was her effort to dissimulate, that Ginevra was tempted to suspect her of voluntary deafness. The stranger, however, turned in his bed. The Italian looked fixedly at Madame Servin, who thereupon said to her, without the slightest change of countenance, "Your copy is as beautiful as the original. If I had to choose between them, I should be puzzled. "Monsieur Servin has not taken his wife into his confidence in this matter," thought Ginevra, who replied to the young wife's observation with a smile of incredulity, and then began to warble one of her native canzonettas, in order to drown any noise which the prisoner might make.

It was so unusual to hear the studious Italian sing, that all the young girls looked at her in astonishment, and the circumstance was afterwards regarded as a proof of the charitable suppositions of hatred. Madame Servin soon went away, and the sitting came to an end without further incident. Ginevra allowed her companions to go away, while she herself seemed in-

clined for more work; but she unwittingly betrayed her anxiety to be alone; for as the pupils proceeded with their preparations for departure, she eyed them with looks of ill-concealed impatience. Mademoiselle Thirion, who had in a few short hours become a cruel enemy of the girl who excelled her in everything, was guided by the instinct of hate to the conclusion, that beneath the assumed application of her rival, there lay a mystery. She had several times been struck by the attentive manner in which Ginevra had disposed herself to listen for a noise which no one heard. The last expression which she caught gleaming in the eyes of the Italian, was a ray of light to her. She was the last of all the pupils to go away, and went down to Madame Servin's apartments, talked with her for a moment, then, pretending to have forgotten her bag, she quietly remounted the staircase, and saw Ginevra mounted on a hastily erected scaffolding, and so absorbed in her contemplation of the unknown soldier, as not to have heard the light steps of her companion. It is true that, to use an expression

of Sir Walter Scott's, Amélie walked as if she had been treading on eggs. Having regained the door of the study, she coughed; Ginevra trembled, turned her head, saw her enemy, and blushed. She then hastily let down the green serge, in order to disguise her real object; and having set her paint-box in order, left the studio. She carried with her, graven on her memory, the image of a man's head as graceful as that of the Endymion, the *chef-d'œuvre* of Girodet which she had copied some days before.

"Outlaw so young a man! Who can it be? For it is not Marshal Ney." These two phrases are the expression, in their simplest form, of all the ideas which Ginevra turned over in her mind during the two following days. The next day but one, in spite of the haste she made to be the first to reach the studio, she found there Mademoiselle Thirion, who had come in a carriage. Ginevra and her enemy looked at each other for a long time, but their faces were impenetrable masks. Amélie had seen the enchanting head of the stranger, but fortunately, and at the same

time, unfortunately, the eagles and the uniform were not within the space which the chink enabled her to embrace. She was therefore lost in conjecture, when Servin suddenly arrived much earlier than usual.

"Mademoiselle Ginevra," said he, after having glanced round the studio, "why have you stationed yourself there? The light is bad, come nearer to these young ladies, and lower your curtain a little." Thereupon he sat down by Laura, whose labours deserved the most complaisant of his corrections.

"Well now," said he, "here is a head extremely well painted. You will be another Ginevra."

The master went from easel to easel, scolding, flattering, joking, and making himself, as usual, more formidable on account of his witticisms than his reprimands. The Italian girl had not obeyed the direction of the professor, and stuck to her post with the firm determination not to be driven from it. She took a scrap of paper, and began to make a rough sepia drawing of the head of the poor recluse. A work which is the fruit of pas-

sionate conception always has a certain peculiar stamp. The faculty of interpreting the production of nature, or of the imagination in true colours, constitutes genius; passion often supplies its place. Thus in the situation in which Ginevra was placed, the intuition which she owed to the vivid impression made upon her memory, or perhaps necessity, that mother of great things, endowed her with supernatural talent. The officer's head was reproduced upon the paper, under the influence of an internal tremor which Ginevra ascribed to fear, though a physiologist would have regarded it as the fever of inspiration. She cast from time to time a furtive glance at her companions, in order that she might be prepared to hide the water-colour in case of any indiscretion on their part; but in spite of her sharp look-out, there was a moment in which it escaped her notice that her remorseless enemy's eye-glass hidden by a portfolio, was directed full upon the mysterious sketch. Mademoiselle Thirion, who recognized the face of the outlaw, brusquely raised her head, and Ginevra concealed the scrap of paper.

"Why have you remained there in spite of my advice, mademoiselle?" asked the painter gravely.

The pupil hastily turned her easel in such a direction, that no one could see her sketch, then showing it to the painter, she said with emotion, "Don't you agree with me, that this light is more favourable? Had I not better stay here?"

Servin turned pale. Since nothing escapes the piercing eye of hate, Mademoiselle Thirion made a third party, so to speak, in the emotions which agitated the master and pupil.

"You are right," said Servin; "but you will soon know more than I do," he added with a forced laugh. There was a pause during which the professor looked at the sketch of the officer's head.

"This is a *chef-d'œuvre* worthy of Salvator Rosa," cried he with the energy of an artist. At this exclamation all the young girls rose, and Mademoiselle Thirion rushed up with all the impetuosity of a tiger throwing itself upon its prey. At this very moment the outlaw, awakened by the noise, moved in his bed; whereupon

Ginevra knocked down her stool, uttered a few incoherent phrases, and began to laugh; but she had folded up the portrait and thrown it into her portfolio before her formidable foe had time to catch sight of it. The easel was now surrounded. Servin pointed out in a loud voice the beauties of the copy on which his favourite pupil was engaged, and everybody was deceived by the stratagem—except Amélie. She, placing herself behind her companions, tried to open the portfolio in which she had seen the sketch put—Ginevra seized the portfolio, and placed it in front of her without a word. The two young girls then scrutinized each other in silence.

"Come, ladies, to your seats," said Servin, "If you want to know as much about painting as Mademoiselle de Piombo knows, you must not be constantly talking about balls and fashions, and fiddle-faddling as you do."

When all the young women had got back to their places, Servin sat down beside Ginevra.

"Was it not better that I, rather than another, should have discovered this

secret?" said the Italian girl, speaking in a low tone.

"Yes," replied the painter. "You are a patriot; but even if you were not, I should still have chosen you for my confidant."

The master and pupil understood each other, and Ginevra no longer feared to ask,—

"Who is he?"

"The intimate friend of Labédoyère, the man who, next to the unfortunate colonel, has contributed most to the junction of the seventh regiment with the grenadiers of the Island of Elba. He was commander of a squadron in the guard, and has just returned from Waterloo."

"Why did you not burn his uniform, and give him a suit of plain clothes?" asked Ginevra sharply.

"They will bring me some this evening."

"You ought to have closed the studio for a few days."

"He is going away."

"He wants to die then?" said the young girl. "Let him stay with you during the

first stage of the commotions. Paris is still the only place in France where you can safely hide a man. Is he a friend of yours?" she inquired.

"No; he has no title to my protection other than his misfortunes. I will tell you how he was saddled upon me. My father-in-law, who had re-entered the service during this campaign, met this poor young fellow, and rescued him from the claws of those who arrested Labédoyère. He was mad enough to want to defend him!"

"Is it you who call him mad for that?" asked Ginevra, staring at the painter, who was silent for a moment.

"My father-in-law is too closely watched to be able to keep any one at his house; so he brought me this stranger by night, last week. I hoped to conceal him from every one by shutting him up in this corner, which is the only spot in the house where he can be in safety."

"If I can be of any use to you, employ me," said Ginevra. "I know Marshal Feltre."

"Well, we shall see," replied the painter.

This conversation was too prolonged to escape the observation of any of the girls. Servin left Ginevra, and paid a visit to each easel, giving such lengthy lessons that he was still upon the stairs when the clock struck the hour for the pupils' departure.

"You are forgetting your bag, Mademoiselle Thirion," cried the professor, running after the young girl, who descended to the trade of a spy, in order to gratify her hate.

The inquisitive pupil, assuming an air of surprise at her own stupidity, went back to look for her bag, but Servin's caution was to her another proof of the existence of a mystery, whose importance was beyond a doubt. She had already invented all that could possibly be, and might say, with the Abbé Bertot, "*Mon siége est fait.*" She ran noisily down the stairs and slammed the door which opened into Servin's apartments, so as to create the impression that she had gone away; but she stealthily reascended the stairs, and ensconced herself behind the door of the studio. When the painter and Ginevra thought they were alone, he tapped in a

peculiar manner at the door of the attic. The door immediately turned on its rusty and creaking hinges, and the Italian girl beheld a tall, well-made young man, whose Imperial uniform stirred her heart. The officer's arm was in a sling, and the pallor of his features showed how keen had been his sufferings. When he saw a stranger he trembled. Amélie, who could not see anything, was afraid to remain any longer; but it was enough that she had heard the creaking of the door, so she stole noiselessly away.

"Fear nothing," said the painter to the officer; "this is the daughter of the emperor's most faithful friend, the Baron de Piombo."

The young soldier cast away all doubt as to the patriotism of Ginevra so soon as he had seen her.

"Are you wounded?" she inquired.

"Oh, it is nothing, mademoiselle; the wound is closing."

At that moment the harsh and penetrating voices of the newsmen, proclaiming, "This is the sentence of death pronounced—" reached the studio.

All three of them trembled; the soldier was the first to catch a name which blanched his face.

"Labédoyère!" he exclaimed, sinking on to the stool.

They looked at each other in silence. Beads of sweat oozed from the pale forehead of the young man. Seizing in one hand, with a gesture of despair, the black clusters of his hair, he rested his elbow on the edge of Ginevra's easel.

"After all," he exclaimed, drawing himself up briskly, "Labédoyère and I knew what we were doing. We knew the lot which awaited us after the triumph, and after the failure. He dies for the cause, and I am in hiding . . . ."

He rushed to the door of the studio, but Ginevra, more alert than he, had darted forward, and barred his path.

"Can you re-establish the emperor?" said she. "Do you think that you can raise the giant who was unable to stand upright himself?"

"What would you have me do with myself?" said the outlaw, addressing the two friends whom chance had sent him.

"I have not a single relation in the world. Labédoyère was my protector and my friend. I am now alone. To-morrow, perhaps, I shall be outlawed or condemned. I never had any fortune besides my pay; I employed my last crown in endeavouring to save Labédoyère from his fate and carry him off. Therefore death is a necessity for me; and when one is determined to die, one must sell one's head to the executioner as dearly as possible. I was thinking just now that the life of one honest man is quite as valuable as the lives of two traitors, and that a well-planted stab with a poniard may confer immortality."

This fit of despair frightened the painter and also Ginevra, who well understood the young man's frame of mind.

The Italian girl admired the beautiful head and the exquisite voice, whose sweet tones lost but little of their sweetness even under the influence of fury; and she forthwith proceeded to pour balm into all the wounds of the unhappy youth.

"Sir," said she, "as for your pecuniary distress, suffer me to offer you the gold which I have saved. My father is rich, I

am his only child, he loves me, and I am quite sure that he will not blame me; don't scruple to accept my offer; our wealth is the emperor's gift; we do not possess one centime which is not the result of his munificence. Is it not a proof of gratitude to him, to render a service to one of his faithful soldiers? Take, then, this sum, with as little scruple as I feel in tendering it. It is only money," she added in a tone of contempt. "Now, as to friends, you will be sure to find some," as she said this she proudly raised her head, and her eyes gleamed with an unwonted light. "The head which will droop to-morrow under the fire of a dozen muskets saves yours," she pursued. "Wait until this storm be past, and you may go and seek service in some foreign army, if they do not forget you, or in the French service, if they do."

There is in the consolation that comes from a woman something maternal, foreseeing, and complete; but when words of peace and hope are spoken with that eloquence which proceeds from the heart, and especially when the benefactress is beautiful, it is difficult for a young man to resist.

The colonel drew in love through every sense; a faint rose-tint coloured his white cheeks, his eyes lost something of the melancholy which obscured them, and he said in a peculiar tone of voice, "You are an angel of goodness, but—Labédoyère! Labédoyère!"

At that cry the three looked at each other in silence, and understood one another. They were no longer friends of only twenty minutes' standing, but of twenty years'.

"My good fellow," resumed Servin, "can you save him?"

"I can avenge him."

Ginevra trembled. Although the stranger was handsome, it was not his appearance which had worked upon the young girl; the gentle pity which women find in their hearts for those sorrows which are not ignoble, had stifled in Ginevra every other affection; but to hear the cry of vengeance, to find in this outlaw an Italian heart, devotion to Napoleon, Corsican generosity, this was too much for her. She therefore contemplated the officer with respectful emotion, which made a deep im-

pression on his heart. This was the first time that any man had aroused in her so lively a feeling. She took a pleasure, as any other woman would have done, in establishing a harmony between the mind of the stranger and the distinguished beauty of his features and happily proportioned figure, which she admired as an artist. Led by chance curiosity to pity, and from pity to intense interest, she was proceeding from that interest to feelings so profound, that she deemed it dangerous to remain there longer.

"Till to-morrow," she said, leaving behind her with the officer the sweetest of her smiles, by way of consolation.

When he saw that smile which threw, as it were, a new light upon the face of Ginevra, the stranger was, for a moment, oblivious of everything.

"To-morrow," he repeated sadly, "to-morrow, Labédoyère—"

Ginevra turned round, placed a finger on her lips, and looked at him as if she would say,—

"Be calm, be prudent."

Thereupon the young man cried, "O

Dio, che non vorrei vivere dopo averla veduta" (O God, who would not desire to live after having seen her?)

The peculiar tone in which the words were pronounced made Ginevra tremble.

"Are you a Corsican?" she inquired, going back to him, while her heart fluttered with delight.

"I was born in Corsica," he replied, "but I was taken to Genoa when I was very young; and as soon as I was old enough for military service, I enlisted."

The beauty of the stranger, the extraordinary charm inspired by his devotion to the emperor, his wound, his misfortunes, even his peril, all vanished from the mind of Ginevra, or rather all were blended in a single new and exquisite feeling. The outlaw was a child of Corsica; he spoke its cherished tongue! For a moment, the young girl stood motionless, chained to the spot by a magical sensation; she had under her very eyes a living picture, to which chance and every human feeling combined, contributed their lively colours. At the invitation of Servin the soldier had sat down upon a sofa, and the artist had un-

fastened the scarf which supported the arm of his guest, and was engaged in baring it in order to dress the wound. Ginevra shuddered when she saw the long deep wound inflicted by a sword blade on the fore-arm of the youth, and uttered a wail. The stranger raised his head to look at her, and smiled. There was something touching, something that went to the heart, in the care with which Servin removed the lint and touched the wounded flesh ; while the face of the patient, though pale and worn, showed pleasure rather than suffering as he looked at the young girl. An artist must needs admire this opposition of sentiments, and the contrasts produced by the white linen and naked arm with the red and blue uniform of the officer. At that moment the studio was somewhat dark, but a parting sunbeam shed its light upon the spot where the outlaw was seated, so that his fine pale face, black hair, and uniform were bathed in light. This simple effect, the superstitious Italian took as a lucky omen. Under this aspect the stranger looked like a heavenly messenger come to her with her native language on his lips,

to place her under the charm of the memories of childhood, while her heart gave birth to a feeling as fresh and pure as her early days of innocence. For one brief moment she paused to reflect, as if buried deep in infinite thought; then blushing at having allowed her preoccupation to be seen, she exchanged one sweet, short glance with the outlaw, and fled with his image still before her.

The next day was not a lesson day. Ginevra came to the studio, and the prisoner was able to enjoy the society of his compatriot. Servin, who had a sketch to finish, allowed the recluse to be in the studio, and acted as Mentor to the two young people, who often talked to each other in the Corsican tongue. The poor soldier narrated his sufferings during the retreat from Moscow, for though then only nineteen, he had been present at the passage of the Beresina, he alone of all his regiment; for he had lost his comrades, the only persons who would interest themselves in an orphan. He described in fiery language the grand disaster of Waterloo. His voice was music to the Italian girl.

Brought up in Corsican fashion, she knew not what it was to lie, and abandoned herself, with perfect freedom, to her feelings; she avowed them, or rather allowed them to be divined, without resorting to the artifices of the petty calculating coquetry of Parisian young ladies. During this day she frequently paused with her palette in one hand and her brush in the other, not dipping her brush into the colours, but keeping her eyes fixed upon the officer; thus with slightly parted lips would she listen, ever ready to give the picture that touch which she never gave. She was not surprised to see so tender an expression in the eyes of the young man, for she felt her own grow tender in spite of her wish to keep them severe and calm. Then she went on painting for hours together, without raising her head, because he was there, close by her, watching her paint. When first he came to sit beside her and watch her silently, she said to him in a tone of deep emotion and after a long pause, "It amuses you, then, to see people painting?" On this day, too, she learned that his name was Luigi. Before they separated, it was

agreed between them that if any important political event should happen, Ginevra should inform him of it by singing in a low voice certain Italian songs.

On the next day Mademoiselle Thirion informed all her companions, in the strictest confidence, that Ginevra di Piombo had for a lover a young man who came during lesson-time and took up his quarters in the dark closet in the studio.

"Do you," she said to Mademoiselle Roguin, "you who take her part, examine her closely, and you will see how she passes her time."

Ginevra, therefore, was subjected to a diabolical scrutiny. Her songs were listened to; her looks closely watched. At the moment when she fancied she was seen by no one, a dozen pairs of eyes were incessantly brought to bear upon her.

Thus forewarned, these young girls interpreted in their true sense the expressions which flitted across the bright face of the Italian girl, her warblings, and the attention which she devoted to the indistinct sounds which traversed the partition and were audible only to her. At the end

of a week, only one of Servin's fifteen pupils had resisted the temptation to examine Louis through the chink in the partition. This one was Laura, who from an instinctive weakness still defended the beautiful Corsican girl. Mademoiselle Roguin tried to induce Laura to remain upon the staircase at the hour of departure, in order that she might have proof of the intimacy between Ginevra and the handsome young man, by taking them by surprise when they were together. But she refused to stoop to play the spy when she could not even plead curiosity, and so became the object of universal reprobation. Ere long the daughter of the officer of the king's chamber discovered that it was not at all fitting that she should go to the studio of a painter whose opinions were tinged with patriotism or Bonapartism, which at that epoch were one and the same thing. So she returned to Servin's no more. If Amélie forgot Ginevra, the evil seed which she had sown produced its fruit; for it gradually came to pass, that either by chance, or from a love of chattering, or through prudery, all the other young women informed their

mothers of the strange things which were going on at the studio. One day Mathilde Roguin absented herself; the next lesson-day some other young lady was away, and at last, some three or four of the pupils who had lingered behind after the others had gone, returned no more. Ginevra and Laura, her little friend, were for two or three days the only inhabitants of the deserted studio. The Italian did not notice the falling away, nor even inquire the cause of the absence of her companions. Since she had invented the means of communicating with Louis, she lived in the studio as in some delightful retreat, alone in the midst of a world, thinking of nothing except the officer and the dangers by which he was threatened. This young girl, although she was a sincere admirer of those noble characters who adhere to their political faith, urged Louis to submit himself promptly to the royal authority, in order that she might keep him in France; and Louis was unwilling to submit, because he wished to remain in his hiding-place. If the passions are born and flourish only under the influence of ro-

mantic causes, never had so many circumstances concurred to unite two beings in a single sentiment. The friendship of Ginevra for Louis and of Louis for her, thus made more progress in a month, than an ordinary friendship makes in ten years of drawing-room intercourse. Is not adversity the touchstone of character? Thus Ginevra was easily enabled to appreciate Louis and to know him, and they soon felt a mutual esteem, one for the other. Ginevra, who was older than Louis, derived some pleasure from being courted by a young man so great and so much tried by fate, who united manly experience to all the graces of adolescence. Louis, on his part, felt an inexpressible delight in allowing himself to be apparently protected by a young woman of twenty-five. Was it not a proof of love? The combination of gentleness and pride, of force and weakness, in Ginevra's character, was irresistibly attractive, and Louis was consequently completely subjugated by her. In short, they already loved each other so deeply that they had no need either to deny it or to confess it.

One day towards evening Ginevra heard the agreed signal. Louis knocked a pin against the wood of the partition without producing much more noise than a spider produces in attaching its web. That was how he asked to be let out of his retreat. Ginevra glanced over the studio, failed to see little Laura, and therefore replied to the signal. But when Louis opened the door he saw the young pupil, and hastily retreated. Ginevra, much surprised, looked round, saw Laura, and going up to her easel said, "You stay very late, my darling. That head, nevertheless, seems to me to be finished. All you have to do is just to add one little touch of light on the top of this tress of hair."

"It would be very good of you," said Laura with feeling, "if you would correct my copy, so that I might have something of yours to keep."

"I am quite willing," said Ginevra, who was sure that this would be the best way to get rid of her. "I thought," she added, while giving a light touch to the picture here and there, "that you lived a long way from the studio?"

"Oh, Ginevra, I am going away, and for good," said the young girl sadly.

"You are going to leave Monsieur Servin?" asked the Italian girl, without seeming to be affected by Laura's words, as she would have been a month before.

"You have not observed then, Ginevra, that for some time past there is no one here but you and I?"

"That is true," replied Ginevra, on whom the idea flashed like a souvenir. "Are these young ladies ill then? are they going to be married? or are their fathers all on duty at the court?"

"They have all left Monsieur Servin's," replied Laura.

"And wherefore?"

"Because of you, Ginevra."

"Of me!" repeated the Corsican girl, rising with threatening brow, proud look, and flashing eyes.

"Oh, don't be angry, my dear Ginevra," cried Laura sadly, "but my mother wishes me also to leave the studio. All these young ladies have been saying that you were carrying on a love intrigue, that

Monsieur Servin was countenancing your lover's remaining in the dark closet. I never believed these calumnies, and said nothing about them to my mother. Yesterday evening, Madame Roguin met my mother at a ball, and asked her whether she continued to send me here. When my mother said yes, Madame Roguin repeated the lies of these young ladies. My mother scolded me soundly; she maintained that I must have known all that was going on, that I had, by keeping silence, betrayed the confidence which should exist between mother and daughter. Oh, my darling Ginevra, how grieved I am not to be able to be your companion still—I who took you for my model!"

"Oh, we shall meet again in society; young girls marry," said Ginevra.

"When they are rich," replied Laura.

"Come and see me; my father has money."

"Ginevra," resumed Laura, who was much affected, "Madame Roguin and my mother are coming here to-morrow to reproach Monsieur Servin; at least let him know of it beforehand."

If a thunderbolt had fallen two feet from where Ginevra was standing, she could not have been more astonished than she was by this revelation.

"What business was it of theirs?" she said naively.

"Everybody considered it very wrong. Mamma says that it is contrary to morality. . . ."

"And you, Laura, what do you think of it?"

The young girl looked at Laura and their thoughts blended; Laura, who could no longer refrain from tears, threw her arms round her friend's neck and kissed her. At that moment Servin arrived.

"Mademoiselle Ginevra," said he enthusiastically, "I have finished my picture; it is now being varnished. But what is the matter with you? It would seem that all these young ladies are taking a holiday, or are in the country."

Laura dried her tears, bowed to Servin, and retired.

"The studio has been deserted for several days past," said Ginevra, "and the young ladies will return no more."

"Bah!"

"Oh, it is no laughing matter," said Ginevra. "Listen to me, I am the unwilling cause of your loss of reputation."

The artist began to smile and interrupted his pupil.

"My reputation!" said he. "Why, in a few days my picture will be exhibited."

"The question does not concern your talent, but your morality," said the Italian. "These girls have circulated the story of Louis being shut up here, and have said that you winked at—our love."

"Well, there is some truth in that, mademoiselle," replied the professor. "The mothers of these girls are impertinent prudes," he continued. "If they had come to me, all would have been explained. But, do you think that I trouble my head about the matter? Life is too short." And the painter snapped his fingers above his head. Louis, who had heard a part of this conversation, now joined them.

"You are about to lose all your pupils," he cried, "and I shall have been the cause of your ruin?"

The artist took the hands of Louis and

Ginevra, and joined them, "you will marry each other, will you not, my children?" he asked with touching benevolence. They both looked down, and their silence was their first confession of love. "Well," cried Servin, "you will be happy, will you not? Is there anything which can weigh in the balance against the happiness of two creatures such as you are?"

"I am rich," said Ginevra, "and you will allow me to indemnify you."

"Indemnify!" cried Servin. "Why, when it is known that I have been the victim of the calumnies of a set of fools, and that I was harbouring an outlaw; why all the liberals in Paris will send me their daughters. I shall then, perhaps, be your debtor."

Louis grasped the hands of his protector without being able to utter a single word; but at length he said with much feeling, "I shall be indebted to you, then, for all my happiness."

"Be happy; I unite you," said the painter, with comic unction, as he laid his hands upon the heads of the two lovers.

This bit of fun on the part of the artist put

an end to their serious feelings. They looked at each other and began to laugh. The Italian grasped the hand of Louis tightly; and with a simplicity of action worthy of the manners of her country. "Ah, my dear children," resumed Servin, "you appear to think that everything is as smooth as possible. Well, you are in error." The lovers looked at each other in astonishment.

"Take heart; I am the only person embarrassed by your little frolic. Madame Servin is a little strait-laced, and in truth I don't quite know how we shall square matters with her."

"Good God, I forgot," cried Ginevra. "To-morrow Madame Roguin and Laura's mother are coming here to—"

"I understand," interposed the painter.

"But you can set yourself right," resumed the young girl with a haughty movement of the head; "Monsieur Louis," said she, turning towards him and looking at him knowingly, "must by this time have laid aside all antipathy to the king's government. Well," continued she, catching her lover's smile, "to-morrow morning I will send a

petition to one of the most influential personages in the war department, a man who can refuse nothing to the daughter of the Baron de Piombo. We will obtain a tacit pardon for Monsieur Louis, the commandant, for *they* won't recognize your colonelcy. And you" she added, turning to Servin, "can confront the mothers of my charitable companions by telling them the truth."

"You are an angel," cried Servin.

While this scene was going on in the studio, Ginevra's father and mother were growing uneasy at her prolonged absence.

"It is six o'clock, and Ginevra has not yet returned," cried Bartholoméo.

"She has never stayed out so late," replied Piombo's wife.

The two old folks looked at each other with no ordinary anxiety depicted on their faces. Too much excited to sit still, Bartholoméo rose and walked twice round the room, showing a good deal of activity for a man of seventy-seven. Thanks to his robust constitution, he was not much changed since the day of his arrival in Paris, and notwithstanding his height, he still

bore himself erect. His large protuberant head, which could be easily seen through the thin white hair, gave a high idea of his character and firmness. His face, which was marked with deep furrows, had assumed a very well marked character and retained that pallid look which inspires veneration. The unnatural fire in his eyes, whose brows were not quite white, and which retained their terrible mobility, showed that he was still under the influence of impetuous passions. The whole head had an aspect of severity; but it was clear that Piombo had the right to be severe. His benevolence and gentleness were scarcely known except to his wife and child.

While exercising his functions, or in the presence of a stranger, he never laid aside the majesty which age gave to his appearance; and his habit of knitting his thick brows, of contracting the wrinkles of his face, and of infusing into his looks a Napoleonic fixity, rendered his address quite freezing. During the course of his political existence, he was so generally feared that he was held to be very unsociable; but it is not difficult to explain the origin

of this opinion. The life, the morals, and the fidelity of Piombo were a standing reproach to the greater number of courtiers. Notwithstanding the delicate missions which had been entrusted to his discretion, and would have been highly profitable to any one else, he possessed no fortune beyond an income of 30,000 francs from money invested in the public funds.

Any one who considers the low price of the funds under the empire, and Napoleon's generosity to those of his faithful servants who were not too proud to ask, will see at once that the Baron de Piombo was a man of the strictest integrity. As for his baron's plumage, *that* he owed to the necessity Napoleon experienced of conferring on Piombo a title when he was sent to a foreign court. Bartholoméo had always possessed a profound hatred for the traitors whom Napoleon summoned around him, hoping to gain them over by dint of victories. It is said that it was Piombo who took three steps to the door of the emperor's cabinet after advising him to get rid of three men in France, on the eve of the day on which Napoleon started for

his admirable campaign of 1814. Since the second return of the Bourbons, Bartholoméo gave up wearing the insignia of the Legion of Honour. Never was there a finer specimen of those old republicans, incorruptible adherents of the emperor, who survived like animated ruins of the two most energetic governments that the world has known. If the Baron de Piombo were distasteful to certain courtiers, he had such men as Daru, Drouot, and Carnot for his friends. As for the other politicians, he troubled himself as little about them since Waterloo, as he did about the whiffs of smoke from his cigar.

Bartholoméo de Piombo had bought the old Hôtel de Portenduère, with the very moderate sum which the emperor's mother had given for his Corsican property. He made no alterations in it; for being almost always housed at the expense of the government, he only occupied this dwelling since the catastrophe of Fontainebleau. Like all simple-minded people of high probity, the baron and his wife made no provision for external display; they retained the old furniture of the hotel. The

large, lofty, sombre, and naked rooms of this abode, the immense mirrors in their old gilt frames now nearly black, and the furniture of the time of Louis XIV. were in keeping with the appearance of Piombo and his wife—persons worthy of the olden times. Under the empire and during the hundred days, while in the exercise of largely remunerated functions, the old Corsican had kept a large establishment, from a desire to do honour to the post he occupied, rather than from a desire to shine. His existence and that of his wife were so frugal and so quiet, that their moderate fortune supplied all their wants. To them their daughter, Ginevra, was worth all the riches in the world. So, when in May, 1814, the Baron de Piombo resigned his office, sent away his servants, and closed his stable door, Ginevra, who like her parents, was simple and unpretending, did not feel the least regret. Like all great minds, she sought her luxury in the strength of her feelings, as she sought for happiness in solitude and work. Moreover, these three persons loved each other too well to attach any value to the mere frame-work

of existence. Often, and especially since Napoleon's last most fearful fall, Bartholoméo and his wife would pass delightful evenings in listening to Ginevra playing on the piano, or hearing her sing. They found an immense source of pleasure in her company, in her lightest word; they followed her with their eyes with tender anxiety; they could hear her footstep in the court, however lightly it might fall. Sometimes the three would, like lovers, be silent for hours together, understanding better than any words could teach them, the unspoken feelings of their hearts. This deep feeling, which was the very life of the old people, inspired all their thoughts. They had not three existences, but one existence, which, like the flame of a fire, divided itself into three tongues. If the recollection of Napoleon's benefits, if the politics of the hour, would sometimes prevail over the persistent affection of the old people, they could talk on those topics without breaking the community of their ideas. For did not Ginevra share their political passions? What could be more natural than the eagerness with which they took refuge in

the heart of their only child. Up till that period the avocations of public life had absorbed the energy of the Baron de Piombo; but when he had resigned his appointments, he found it necessary to transfer his energy to the last sentiment that remained to him. Then, moreover, there was perhaps, apart from the ties which bind a father and mother to their daughter, a powerful reason for the fanaticism of their reciprocal passion; their love was not divided; Ginevra's whole heart belonged to her father, as her father's did to her. Hence the only imperfection in this triple existence; Ginevra's volitions were intense; she was vindictive and impetuous as Bartholeméo had been in youth. The Corsican took a pleasure in developing these savage feelings in his daughter's heart, just as a lion teaches its whelps to spring upon their prey. But since this apprenticeship to vengeance could not very well go on, except under her father's roof, Ginevra forgave her father nothing, and he was obliged to give way to her. Piombo regarded these childish quarrels as mere trifles; but none the less

did they teach the child the habit of tyrannizing over her parents. In the midst of the tempests which Bartholoméo loved to arouse, a single affectionate word, a single look, would calm their irritated souls, and they were never so nearly kissing, as when they were actually threatening, each other. For the last five years, however, Ginevra, who had become wiser than her father, persistently avoided scenes of this description. Her fidelity, her devotion, the love which reigned in all her thoughts, and her admirable good sense, had conquered her irritations, but at the same time one great evil had resulted from them ; Ginevra lived with her mother and father on a footing of equality, which is always fatal. In order to complete our account of the changes which had affected these three persons since their arrival in Paris, we must add that Piombo and his wife, who were uneducated, had allowed Ginevra to study according to her own inclination. Guided only by her girlish fancies, she had learned something of every subject, then quitted it, adopting and abandoning each line of thought in turn, until painting had be-

come her dominant passion. Had her mother been capable of directing her studies, of giving her instruction, and bringing into harmony the gifts of nature, she would have been perfect; her defects arose from the fatal education which the old Corsican had taken pleasure in giving her.

After the old man's heavy footstep had for some time made the floor creak beneath him, he rang the bell and a servant appeared.

"Go and meet Mademoiselle Ginevra," said the baron.

"I always regretted we had no carriage for her," said the baroness.

"She did not want to have one," said Piombo, looking at his wife, who, faithful to the rôle of obedience which she had played for forty years, looked down.

The baroness, who was now seventy, was tall, withered, pale and wrinkled, and bore a close resemblance to those old women whom Schnetz introduces into the Italian scenes of his pictures of genre. She was so accustomed to hold her tongue, that one might have taken her for another Mrs. Shandy; but from time to time a word, a

look, a gesture, announced that she had retained her youthful vigour and freshness. Her dress—which was perfectly unstudied—was often deficient in good taste. Generally like some Valideh Sultan, she remained passive, buried in a large armchair, waiting for or watching her Ginevra, her pride and life. Her daughter's beauty, dress, and grace seemed to have become her own. All was well with her so long as Ginevra was happy. Her hair had turned white, and a few scattered locks showed themselves above her brow and wrinkled forehead, or strayed adown her hollow cheeks.

"Ginevra has been rather late every day for about the last fortnight," said the baroness.

"Jean won't go quick enough," said the impatient old man, buttoning up his blue coat, snatching up his hat, which he fixed firmly on his head, then taking his cane and making off.

"You wont have far to go," said his wife. For in fact the great door had opened and closed, and the old mother heard Ginevra's footsteps in the court.

Bartholoméo suddenly reappeared, carrying his daughter in triumph, while she was struggling in his arms. "Here she is, the Ginevra, the Ginevrettina, the Ginevrina, the Ginevrola, the Ginevretta, the Ginevra bella."

"Father, you hurt me."

Ginevra was immediately set down with a kind of respect. She shook her head gracefully, in order to allay her mother's fears, and show her that her cry was a mere ruse. Thereupon the mother's pale wan face regained its natural hue, and assumed an air of gaiety. Piombo rubbed his hands most vigorously; a sure sign that he was pleased. He had contracted this habit at the court by seeing Napoleon, when he flew into a rage with any of his generals or ministers who had served him ill, or had been guilty of some fault. When once the muscles of his face relaxed, the least wrinkle in it bespoke benevolence.

At this moment the two old people presented an exact analogy to drooping plants restored to life by a little water after a long drought.

"To table, to table," exclaimed the

baron, presenting his large hand to Ginevra, whom he called Signora Piombellina, another symptom of gaiety, which his daughter acknowledged with a smile.

"Ah, yes," said Piombo, when dinner was over, "do you know that your mother says that during the last month you have stayed much later than usual at the studio. It would seem that painting takes precedence of us."

"Oh, father. . . ."

"No doubt Ginevra is preparing some surprise for us," said the mother.

"What, going to bring me one of your pictures?" said the Corsican, clapping his hands.

"Yes, I am very busy at the studio," she replied.

"What is the matter with you, Ginevra, you look pale?" said her mother.

"No!" cried the girl with a gesture of determination. "No, it shall not be said that Ginevra Piombo has told a lie, even once in her life!"

When Piombo and his wife heard this singular exclamation, they looked at their daughter with an air of astonishment.

"I am in love with a young man," she added in a voice of emotion. Then, without venturing to look at her parents, she drooped her large eyelids as if to veil the lightning of her eyes.

"Is he a prince?" asked the father ironically, in a tone which made the mother and daughter tremble.

"No, father," she modestly replied; "it is a young man without fortune."

"He must be very handsome then?"

"He is unfortunate."

"What is he?"

"He was a comrade of Labédoyère, was outlawed and without a refuge. Servin concealed him, and . . . ."

"Servin is an honest lad, and has acted well," cried Piombo. "But you, my daughter, are acting badly in loving another man more than your own father. . . ."

"I cannot help loving," said Ginevra gently.

"I was hoping," resumed her father, "that my Ginevra would be constant to me until my death; that my care and that of her mother would be the only care she would receive; that our affection would

have encountered no rival affection in her heart, and that . . . ."

"Did I ever reproach you on account of your fanaticism for Napoleon?" said Ginevra. "Have you loved no one but me? Have you not been away for months together, as an ambassador? Have I not borne your absence bravely? Life has certain necessities which we must learn to submit to."

"Ginevra."

"No, you do not love me for my own sake, your reproaches show an insupportable egotism."

"You dare to accuse your father's love!" cried Piombo with flaming eyes.

"No, father, I will never accuse you," said Ginevra, with more gentleness than her trembling mother looked for. "You are right in your egotism, just as I am right in my love. Heaven be my witness, that never has daughter better fulfilled her duties towards her parents. I have never seen aught but happiness and love where others often have seen nothing but duties. For fifteen years I have never been from under your protecting wing, and it has been

a very sweet pleasure to me to make your days pass happily. But am I ungrateful in yielding to the charm of loving, in desiring to have a husband to protect me when you are gone?"

"Ah, you are reckoning with your father, Ginevra," pursued the old man in a sinister voice.

Then there ensued a frightful pause, during which no one dared to speak. At length Bartholoméo broke the silence by crying in a heartrending voice,—

"Oh, stay with us, stay with your old father. I could not bear to see you loving a man. You won't have to wait for your liberty long, Ginevra."

"But consider, father, that we shall not be parted, that there will be two to love you instead of one, and that you will know who the man is, in whose care you leave me, when you go. You will be doubly cherished, cherished by me and by him; by him who is one with me, and by me who am altogether one with him."

"Oh, Ginevra, Ginevra," cried the Corsican wringing his hands; "why did you not marry at the time when Napoleon had

accustomed me to the idea, and introduced to you dukes and counts ?"

"They loved me according to order," said the girl. "Besides, I didn't want to leave you, and they would have taken me away with them."

"You do not want to leave us alone," said Piombo, "but to marry is to leave us alone. I know you, my daughter, you will love us no more. Elisa," added he, looking at his wife, who sat motionless and almost stunned, "we have no longer a daughter, she wants to marry!"

The old man sat down after having raised his hands in the air as if to invoke the Almighty; then overwhelmed with sorrow he remained with his head bent down.

Ginevra saw the agitation of her father, and the moderation of his anger broke her heart. She expected a crisis, fury; she had not armed her heart against her father's gentleness.

"Father," said she in a touching voice. "No, your Ginevra will never forsake you. But love her also a little for herself. Oh, if you only knew how *he* loves me! ah, he would not cause me any pain."

"Comparisons already!" cried Piombo, in a terrible tone, "no, I cannot endure this idea," he continued. "If he loved you as you deserve to be loved, he would kill me; and if he loved you not, I would stab him."

The hands of Piombo were trembling, his lips were trembling, his whole body trembled, and his eyes darted lightnings. Ginevra only could sustain his glance, for then her own eyes kindled and the daughter was worthy of the father.

"Oh, to love you. Who is the man who is worthy of such a life?" he resumed. "To love you as a father loves, is to be already in Paradise. Who, then, is worthy to be your husband?"

"He is," said Ginevra, "he of whom I feel I am unworthy."

"He?" repeated Piombo mechanically. "Who is *he*?"

"He whom I love."

"Can he know you well enough yet to adore you?"

"But father," said Ginevra, beginning to feel impatient, "even if he did not love me, yet from the moment I love him—"

"You do love him then," cried Piombo. Ginevra gently bowed her head. "You love him then more than you love us?"

"The two feelings cannot be compared," she replied.

"The one is stronger than the other," said Piombo.

"I think so," said Ginevra.

"You shall not marry him," cried the Corsican in a voice which shook the windows of the room.

"I shall marry him," said Ginevra quietly.

"My God! my God!" cried the mother; "how will this quarrel end? Santa Virgina! interpose between them."

The baron, who was striding about the room, sat down; an icy severity overshadowed his face; he looked fixedly at his daughter, and then said to her in a voice that was sweet and gentle,—

"Well, Ginevra, no, you will not marry him. Oh, do not say that you will; this evening, let me believe the contrary. Do you want to see your father on his knees and his white hairs bowing down before you,—I will kneel down."

"Ginevra Piombo has not been accustomed to promise and not to keep her word," she replied, "I am your daughter."

"She is right," said the baroness, "we were sent into the world to marry."

"So you encourage her in her disobedience," said the baron to his wife, who, struck by his expression, became still as a statue.

"To refuse to obey an unjust order is not disobedience," said Ginevra.

"It cannot be unjust, since it emanates from the mouth of your father, my daughter! Why do you judge me? Is not the repugnance which I feel a counsel from on high? I am, perhaps, preserving you from some misfortune."

"The misfortune would be if he did not love me."

"Always *him*."

"Yes, always; he is my life, my wealth, my thought. Even if I obeyed you, he would be ever in my thoughts. To forbid me to marry him is equivalent to my hating you."

"You love us no longer."

"Oh!" cried Ginevra shaking her head.

"Well then, forget him, remain faithful to us. After we—you understand."

"Father, do you wish to make me long for your death?" cried Ginevra.

"I shall live longer than you! children who do not honour their father and mother die soon," cried the father, driven to the last stage of exasperation.

"The more reason why I should marry quickly and be happy," said she.

Her coolness, the strength of her reasoning, completed Piombo's trouble. The blood rushed violently to his head; his face grew purple.

Ginevra shuddered; she flew, swift as a bird, on to her father's knees, put her arms round his neck, stroked his hair, and quite overcome exclaimed,—

"Oh yes, let me die first. I could not survive you, my father, dear father."

"Oh Ginevra, my mad Ginevra!" replied Piombo, all his anger disappearing under this caress, as ice melts in the rays of the sun.

"It was time for you to finish," said the baroness with emotion.

"Poor mother!"

"Ah, Ginevretta, my Ginevra bella!" and the father played with his daughter as if she were a child of six years old. He took a pleasure in undoing the wavy tresses of her hair, in dancing her upon his knee.

There was a touch of madness in the expression of his affection.

His daughter soon began to scold while she embraced him, and jokingly tried to get him to consent that Louis should be introduced to her home; but jokingly also, the father refused. Then Ginevra sulked, returned, and sulked again. At the end of the evening she felt glad that she had familiarized her father's heart both with her love for Louis and with the idea of a not distant marriage. The next day she said no more about her love, went later to the studio, and returned from it early, was more affectionate in her manner to her father than she had ever been, and showed herself full of gratitude, as if to thank him for the consent which, by his silence, he seemed to give to her marriage. In the evening she treated them to a good deal of music, and often did she exclaim,—

"It requires a man's voice for this nocturne."

She was an Italian girl; that is saying everything. One day after an interval of eight days her mother beckoned to her; she went up to her mother, who said to her in a low whisper, "I have persuaded your father to receive him."

"Oh, mother, you make me very happy!"

That day then Ginevra had the pleasure of returning to her father's dwelling, hanging on the arm of Louis. This was the second time that the poor officer had come out of his lurking-place. The urgent solicitations which Ginevra addressed to the Duc de Feltre, then minister of war, had been crowned with complete success. Louis had just been restored to the list of officers unattached. That was a very great step towards a brighter future. Since he had been informed by his young friend of all the difficulties which awaited him at the hands of the baron, the young commandant felt a fear, which he did not dare to confess, of not pleasing him. This man, who had borne adversity with so

much fortitude, who was so brave upon the battle-field, trembled at the thought of entering the drawing-room of the Piombos. Ginevra could feel him trembling and his emotion, whose basis was their mutual happiness, was to her a further proof of love.

"How pale you are," she said to him when they reached the door of the hotel.

"Oh, Ginevra, if it were only life that was at stake!"

Although Bartholoméo had been informed by his wife of the official presentation of Ginevra's lover, he did not rise to meet him, but remained in the armchair in which he was wont to sit. The severity of his brow was quite glacial.

"Father," said Ginevra, "I bring you a person whom you will, no doubt, be pleased to see. This is Monsieur Louis, a soldier who stood within four paces distance of the emperor, at the battle of Mont Saint-Jean."

The Baron de Piombo rose, looked furtively at Louis, and said to him in a sardonic voice, "You wear no decoration, sir?"

"I don't wear the riband of the Legion of Honour now;" Louis uttered these words

timidly, and remained standing in a posture of humility.

Ginevra, wounded by her father's want of politeness, brought forward a chair. The officer's answer satisfied the old servant of Napoleon. Madame Piombo, perceiving that her husband's eyebrows were resuming their natural position, said, with a view to sustaining the conversation,—

"The gentleman's resemblance to Nina Porta is astonishing. Don't you think that he has quite the features of a Porta?"

"Nothing more natural," replied the young man, on whom the flaming eyes of Piombo were now fixed. "Nina was my sister."

"Are you Luigi Porta?" asked the old man.

"Yes."

Bartholoméo di Piombo rose, staggered, was forced to take hold of a chair to support himself, and looked at his wife. Elisa Piombo went up to him; then the two old people quitted the room arm in arm, leaving their daughter with a sort of horror. Luigi Porta looked at Ginevra in

astonishment; she grew as white as a marble statue, and stood with her eyes fixed upon the door through which her father and mother had disappeared. This silence and this retreat were so solemn that the feeling of fear, perhaps for the first time, entered the soldier's heart. Ginevra clasped her hands tightly together and exclaimed in a voice so broken by emotion as to be scarcely audible, except to the ear of a lover, "What misery in a single word!"

"In the name of our love, what have I said?" asked Luigi Porta.

"My father," she replied, "has never spoken of our deplorable history, and I was too young when we left Corsica, to know anything of the story."

"Are we in *vendetta?*" asked Luigi, trembling.

"Yes; on questioning my mother I learned that the Portas had killed my brothers and burnt our house. My father then massacred all your family. How did you escape, you whom, as he supposed at least, he bound to the posts of a bed, before setting fire to the house?"

"I don't know," replied Luigi. "When

six years old I was taken to Genoa, to the house of an old man named Colonna. I did not hear a single detail about my family. I only knew that I was an orphan and without fortune. This Colonna acted the part of father to me, and I bore his name until the day when I entered the service. As I required documents to show who I was, old Colonna said, that I, powerless as I was, and scarcely better than a child, had enemies. He persuaded me to take the name of Luigi only, in order that I might escape them."

"Fly, fly, Luigi!" cried Ginevra, "but no, I must go with you. So long as you are in my father's house you have nothing to fear. As soon as you quit it, you must beware; you will be exposed to danger after danger. My father has two Corsicans in his service, and if he does not try to take your life, they will."

"And will this hatred exist between you and me, Ginevra?"

The young girl smiled sadly, and bowed her head. She then quickly and proudly raised it, saying,—

"Oh, Luigi, pure and sincere indeed

must be our feelings to give me strength to walk in the path which I am about to enter. But the question is a question of life-long happiness, is it not?"

Luigi made no verbal answer, but smiled and pressed Ginevra's hand. The young girl understood that it was only genuine love which could abstain at such a moment from vulgar protestations. The calm and conscientious manner in which Luigi expressed his feelings, in some sort announced their force and their durability. The destiny of the lovers was then sealed. Ginevra foresaw that there were fierce conflicts to be sustained, but the idea of giving up Louis, an idea which had perhaps floated through Ginevra's mind, completely vanished. His and his for ever, she suddenly and energetically drew him out of the hotel, and did not leave him until he had reached the house in which she had procured for him a modest lodging.

When she got back to her father's house, that kind of serenity which is born of a strong determination had stolen over her. There was not in her manner any change that betokened uneasiness. There was no

boldness, there was even much sweetness of expression, in the look which she gave her father and mother, whom she found on the point of sitting down to dinner. She saw that her old mother had been weeping; the redness of her aged eyelids shook Ginevra's resolution for a moment, but she concealed her emotion. Piombo seemed to be under the dominion of a sorrow too deep and concentrated to be expressed in common language. The servants brought in dinner, but no one touched it. A loathing for food is one of the symptoms of these grand crises of the heart. They all three rose to leave the table without one word having been exchanged between them. When Ginevra was seated between her father and mother in the vast, sombre and solemn drawing-room, Piombo would have spoken, but his voice failed him. He tried to walk, but found himself unable, so he sat down and rang the bell.

"Pietro," said he to the servant, "Light a fire, I am cold."

Ginevra trembled and looked at her father with anxiety. The struggle that was on the eve of taking place must be

terrible, and her face was quite upset. She knew the extent of the danger which threatened her, but she did not tremble; while the furtive looks which Bartholoméo cast upon his daugher seemed to announce that he was at that moment afraid of that character whose violence was his own handiwork. Between them no middle course was possible. Thus the certitude of the change which might take place in the feelings of father and daughter kindled an expression of terror on the face of the baroness.

"Ginevra, you love the enemy of your family," said Piombo at length, without venturing to look at his daughter.

"That is true," said she.

"You will have to choose between him and us. Our Vendetta is a part of ourselves. The person who does not espouse my revenge, is not a member of my family."

"My choice is made," replied Ginevra in a calm voice.

Bartholoméo was deceived by his daughter's tranquillity.

"Oh, my dear daughter," cried the old

man, whose eyelids were wet with tears, the first—the only tears he shed in the course of his life.

"I will be his wife," said Ginevra abruptly.

Bartholoméo felt stunned; but recovering self-possession he replied,—

"This marriage shall not take place so long as I am alive. I will never consent to it."

Ginevra was silent.

"But do you consider," said the baron, "that Luigi is the son of the man who killed your brothers?"

"He was only six years old when the crime was committed, and must be innocent of it," she replied.

"A Porta!" cried Bartholoméo.

"But," said the girl sharply, "have I ever shared this hatred? Did you educate me in the belief that a Porta was a monster? Could I suppose that one of them was left? Is it not natural that your Vendetta should succumb to my feelings?"

"A Porta!" said Piombo. "If his father had formerly found you in your bed,

you would not be alive now. He would have put you to death a hundred times."

"That may be," she replied; "but his son has given me more than life. To look upon Luigi is a happiness, deprived of which I cannot live. Through Luigi I have come to know the world of feeling. I have perhaps seen faces more beautiful even than his, but none which has had such a charm for me. I have perhaps heard voices—but no, no, never have I heard voices more melodious: Luigi loves me, he shall be my husband."

"Never," said Piombo, "I would rather see you in your coffin, Ginevra."

The old Corsican rose and began striding about the apartment. Then scanned by pauses which showed his intense agitation, the following words fell from his lips:—

"You think, perhaps, that you will bend my will—undeceive yourself—I will not have a Porta for my son-in-law. That is my final determination. Don't let the subject be mentioned to me again—I am Bartholoméo di Piombo: do you hear, Ginevra?"

"Do you attach any mysterious mean-

ing to those words?" asked Ginevra coldly.

"They mean that I have a dagger, and that I have no fear of human laws. We Corsicans go before God to justify ourselves."

"Well," said the girl, rising, "I am Ginevra di Piombo, and I declare that in six months I shall be the wife of Luigi Porta. You are a tyrant, father," she added, after a fearful pause.

Bartholoméo clenched his fists and struck the marble mantelpiece. "Ah, we are in Paris," he murmured.

Then he was silent, and crossing his arms and drooping his head upon his breast, he uttered not another word during the whole evening. Ginevra having given vent to her determination, assumed an air of imperturbable self-possession. She sat down to the piano, and sang, and played some exquisite pieces with a grace and feeling which showed perfect freedom of spirit; so gaining a triumph over her father, whose brow showed no signs of calming. The old man deeply felt this tacit insult, and reaped at that moment one of

the bitter fruits of the education which he had given to his daughter. Respect is a barrier which affords equal protection to parents and to children. It saves the former from sorrow, and the latter from remorse.

On the next day Ginevra, when about to leave the house, at the hour at which she usually started for the studio, found the door of the hotel fastened against her. But, however, she very soon found a way of informing Luigi Porta of her father's severity. A lady's-maid, who could not read writing, conveyed to the young officer a letter from Ginevra. During five days the two lovers carried on a correspondence, thanks to those schemes which young people of twenty can always invent. Thus, father and daughter rarely spoke to each other. There lay at the bottom of either heart an element of hatred; they suffered, but they suffered proudly, and in silence. When they found how strong were the bonds of affection which united them, they tried to break them, but without success. No tender reflection now lighted up the stern features of Bartholo-

méo when he looked at his daughter. When the girl looked at her father, there was a touch of fierceness in her face, and reproach sat upon her innocent forehead. She indulged indeed in a train of happy thoughts, but at times remorse would steal the brightness from her eye. It was not difficult to guess that she could never tranquilly enjoy a felicity which would cause her parents unhappiness. But alike in the case of Bartholoméo and in that of his daughter, all the irresolution caused by the native goodness of their dispositions was doomed to give way before their pride, before the rancour peculiar to Corsicans. They both nursed their anger and shut their eyes to the future. Perhaps also they both flattered themselves that the one would give way to the other.

On Ginevra's birthday her mother bethought her to take advantage of the memories associated with the day to bring about a reconciliation between the father and daughter, whose grave disunion filled her with despair. They were all three in Bartholoméo's own room. Ginevra guessed her mother's intention from the hesitation

visible in her features, and smiled sadly. Just at that moment a servant announced the arrival of two notaries, who were ushered in, accompanied by several witnesses. Bartholoméo looked fixedly at the two men, whose cold and formal faces were calculated to wound feelings so passionate as those of the three principal actors in the scene. The old man looked uneasily at his daughter, whose face wore a smile of triumph, which made him suspect that some catastrophe was about to take place. But he assumed, after the manner of the savage, a delusive passiveness, and looked at the two notaries with calm curiosity. At the silent invitation of the old man, the strangers sat down.

"I assume that I have the honour of addressing the Baron de Piombo?" said the elder of the two notaries.

Bartholoméo bowed. The notary slightly moved his head, and looked at the young lady; his expression being that of a sheriff's officer arresting a debtor. He then pulled out his snuff-box, and taking from it a pinch of snuff administered it to his nose in little doses, while he conned the

opening phrases of his address. Its delivery was accompanied by continual pauses, an oratorical device which we shall imperfectly represent by a dash.

"Sir," said he, "I am Monsieur Roguin, notary to this young lady your daughter; and we are here—my colleague and I—with a view to carrying out the intent of the law, and—to put an end to the differences which—it would appear—have arisen—between you and the young lady, your daughter—on the subject of—her—marriage with Monsieur Luigi Porta."

It is probable that this period, which was most pedantically delivered, seemed to Maître Roguin too fine to be immediately understood; so he stopped and looked at Bartholoméo with an expression peculiar to men of business, an expression which is a mean between servility and familiarity. From their habit of feigning an interest in the persons whom they address, the features of notaries contract a grimace, which they put on and off, as they do their pallium of office. This mask of benevolence, which is obviously purely mechanical, so irritated Bartholoméo that

he had to summon up all his self-control to resist the temptation of throwing Roguin out of the window. An angry expression stole over his furrowed face, and induced the notary to say to himself, "I am producing an effect."

"But," resumed he in hurried accents, "but, Monsieur le Baron, in cases of this description, it is our duty to be essentially mediatory at the outset,—I beg you will be good enough to listen to me.—It is evident that Mademoiselle Ginevra Piombo—attains on this very day—the age at which it is sufficient, merely to go through the prescribed formal demands, before proceeding forthwith to the celebration of her marriage—in spite of the absence of her parents' consent: now—it is customary among families—which enjoy a certain amount of social consideration—which belong to society, in fact—which possess a certain dignity—which deem it important, in short, not to let the public into the secret of their dissensions—and which, moreover, do not desire to injure themselves by stamping with disapprobation, the future of a young couple—(for that is to injure

oneself)—it is customary, I say—among these honourable families—not to permit such formal records to subsist—records which remain—which are monuments of a division which—in the long-run comes to an end. From the moment—sir, when a young woman has recourse to these formal demands—she gives proof of an intention too decided for her father, and—her mother (he added, turning towards the baroness) to hope to see her follow their advice. Paternal opposition being therefore of no effect—from this fact—in the first place—and being also invalidated by the law, it is clear that a prudent man, after having addressed a final remonstrance to his child, accords her liberty to . . . ."

Monsieur Roguin stopped short when he perceived that he might go on speaking for two hours in that strain, without getting any answer; and he experienced, moreover, a peculiar sensation from the look of the man whom he was endeavouring to persuade. An extraordinary revolution had taken place in the countenance of Bartholoméo. The contraction of all the muscles of the face gave him an appear-

ance of cruelty altogether undefinable, and he looked at the notary with the look of a tiger. The baroness remained mute and passive. Ginevra waited calm and resolute; she knew that the voice of the notary was more powerful than her own, and thereupon she seemed determined to keep silent. At the moment when Roguin ceased to speak, the scene became so terrible that the unknown witnesses trembled; never, perhaps, had they experienced a similar silence. The notaries looked at each other as if in search of counsel one from the other, then rose and went to the window together.

"Did you ever meet clients framed in this fashion?" asked Roguin of his comrade.

"There is nothing to be done with them," replied the younger notary. "If I were in your place, I would confine myself to reading the documents. The old man does not seem to me to be an amusing character; he is passionate, and you will gain nothing by attempting to debate with him."

Monsieur Roguin then read a stamped

document containing a written statement which had been prepared in advance, and coldly asked Bartholoméo what his answer to it was.

"There are then, in France, laws which take away a father's authority?" asked the Corsican.

"Sir," said Roguin in his honied accents.

"Which tear a daughter away from her father?"

"Sir," said the notary.

"Which rob an old man of his last consolation?"

"Sir, your daughter does not belong to you, except . . . ."

"Which kill him?"

"Sir, permit me."

There is nothing more frightful than the self-possession and the precise arguments of a notary, when intruded into the passionate scenes in which he is called upon to interpose. The faces which Piombo saw before him seemed to him to have come straight from hell; his cool and concentrated anger knew no bounds, from the moment when the calm and almost musi-

cal voice of his little opponent uttered that fatal *permit*.

He sprang forward, and seizing a long poniard suspended on a nail above the chimney-piece, rushed towards his daughter. The younger of the two notaries and one of the witnesses threw themselves between him and Ginevra; but Bartholoméo roughly overthrew the two mediators, while his inflamed features and flashing eyes seemed more terrible than the glittering dagger. When Ginevra found herself face to face with her father, she looked at him fixedly with an air of triumph, slowly approached him, and went upon her knees.

"No! no! I cannot," said he, casting he weapon so forcibly from him that it buried itself deeply in the floor.

"Well then, be merciful, be merciful," said the girl. "You hesitate to kill me, and yet you refuse to let me live. Oh, father, never did I love you so well as now. Give me then Luigi. Upon my knees I ask your consent. A daughter may humble herself before her father. Give me Luigi, or I die."

The violent emotion which choked her, prevented her from proceeding; she lost her voice, her convulsive struggles clearly showed that she was between life and death. Bartholoméo repulsed his daughter harshly.

"Away," he cried, "Luigi Porta's wife cannot be a Piombo. I have no daughter now. I lack strength to curse you, but I cast you off; you have no father now. My Ginevra Piombo is buried—there," he cried in deep tones, while he pressed his hands tightly to his heart. "Away with you, then, miserable being," he added, after a moment's pause. "Away, and never appear before me again." Then he took Ginevra's arm, and led her quietly out of the house.

"Luigi," cried Ginevra, as she entered the humble lodging of the officer, "my Luigi, we have no fortune but our love."

"Then we are richer than all the kings on earth," said Luigi.

"My father and mother have abandoned me," said she with profound melancholy.

"I will love you for them."

"We shall be very happy then? cried

she, with a gaiety that had something fearful in it.

"Yes, and for ever," replied he, straining her to his heart.

On the morrow of the day on which Ginevra left her father's house, she went to Madame Servin, and begged that lady to afford her shelter and protection, until the interval required by the law before her marriage with Luigi could take place, had elapsed. Then began her apprenticeship to those sorrows which the world scatters in the path of those who violate its usages. Madame Servin, in her grave annoyance at the injury inflicted on her husband through Ginevra's adventure, received the fugitive very coldly, and told her in language of circumspect politeness that she must not count upon her support.

Too proud to insist, but astonished at a selfishness that was new to her, the young Corsican girl took some apartments in a furnished lodging-house near to the house in which Luigi was staying. The son of the Portas passed every day at the feet of his intended bride; his youthful love and high-toned language dissipated the

clouds which a father's disapproval had piled upon the brow of his banished daughter. So beautiful a picture of the future did Luigi draw, that Ginevra learned at length to smile, though she could not forget the rigour of her parents.

One morning the servant of the house brought Ginevra several trunks containing various stuffs, linen, and a heap of things necessary to a young woman who is beginning house-keeping. She recognized in this consignment the thoughtful kindness of a mother; for on turning over these presents she found a purse in which the baroness had put the sum belonging to her daughter, and also her own savings. Accompanying the money there was a letter in which the mother conjured her daughter to abandon the fatal scheme of marriage if there was yet time. She had been obliged (so ran the letter) to adopt most unheard-of precautions in order to convey that slight assistance to Ginevra. She entreated her daughter not to accuse her of harshness, if in future she left her to her fate; she feared she could aid her no further, gave her a mother's blessing, and

expressed a hope that Ginevra might find happiness in that fatal marriage, if she persisted in it, and assured her that she thought of nothing but her dear daughter. Here several words of the letter had been effaced by tears.

"O my mother!" exclaimed Ginevra, quite softened. She felt a desire to throw herself at her mother's knees, to see her and breathe the beneficent atmosphere of her father's house. She was just rushing out when Luigi entered, and at sight of him her filial affection gave way, her tears dried, and she did not feel strong enough to forsake this lad, who was so unfortunate and so loving. To be the only hope of a noble being, to love him, and to leave him—such a sacrifice is an act of treason of which young hearts are quite incapable. Ginevra had the generosity to bury her sorrow in the depths of her soul.

At length the wedding-day arrived; Ginevra found herself alone. Luigi had taken advantage of the time she spent in dressing herself, to go and find the necessary witnesses to the signature of the marriage contract. These witnesses were two

worthy people. One of them, a former quarter-master of the hussars, had, while in the army, contracted such obligations to Luigi as can never be erased from the mind of an honest man. He was now a coach-master, and possesed several hackney carriages. The second witness, a master builder, was the owner of the house in which the newly-married couple were to reside. Each of the witnesses got a friend to accompany him, and then the four men went with Luigi to fetch the bride. Being little accustomed to the conventionalities of social life, and deeming the service, which they were about to render Luigi, a very simple one, these worthy folks had dressed themselves decently, but not in holiday attire; so that they did not present the gay appearance of a wedding-party. Ginevra dressed herself very simply, that her attire might be in conformity with her fortune; nevertheless, there was something so noble and so imposing in her beauty, that at sight of her the compliments which the witnesses felt it their bounden duty to address to her, died upon their lips; they saluted her

respectfully, and she bowed in return; they confined themselves to looking at her in silent admiration; joy can have free play only among persons who feel that they are equals.

Thus, as chance would have it, all the surroundings of the betrothed were sad and sombre; there was nothing to reflect their happiness. The church and the mayor's house were not far from the hotel.

The two Corsicans, followed by the four witnesses required by law, determined to set out on foot; so that this grand scene in the drama of social life was deprived of all pomp and circumstance. The wedding-party found in the court of the mairie a crowd of carriages, showing that there was a large gathering of visitors within. They went upstairs, and reached a very large hall, in which the couples who were to be made happy on that day were very impatiently awaiting the arrival of the mayor of the district. Ginevra sat down near to Luigi at the end of a long bench, while their witnesses remained standing for lack of seats. Two brides ostentatiously arrayed in white, covered with

ribands, lace, and pearls, and crowned with wreaths of orange flowers, whose satin buds glistened beneath the veils, were there, surrounded by their joyous relatives, and accompanied by their mothers, whom they looked at with a glance of contentment mingled with fear.

Every eye reflected their happiness, and every face seemed to shower blessings upon them. Fathers, witnesses, brothers, and sisters went and came like a swarm of bees, rejoicing in a transient sunbeam. Every one seemed to understand the value of that fugitive moment of existence, in which the heart finds itself between two sets of hopes—the aspirations of the past, and the promises of the future. At this sight, Ginevra felt her heart swell and pressed the arm of Luigi, who darted one glance at her. A tear stole to the eye of the young Corsican, for then he understood more fully than ever all that his Ginevra was sacrificing for him. That precious tear drove from the young girl's memory the isolation in which she found herself. Love poured its precious rays upon the two lovers, who under its influence saw nothing but each other in all

that tumult; there, in that crowd, they were, as they would be in life, alone. Their witnesses, indifferent to the ceremony, quietly discussed their own affairs.

"Oats are very dear," said the quartermaster to the mason.

"They are not yet so dear as plaster, proportionately" replied the builder, and they took a turn in the hall.

"What a lot of time is wasted here!" said the mason, replacing in his pocket a huge silver watch.

Luigi and Ginevra were sitting so close together that they seemed only one and the same person. Surely a poet would have admired these two heads, brought together by the same sentiment, and flushed with the same colour; melancholy and mute in the presence of two noisy wedding-parties, of four boisterous families, decked with sparkling diamonds and with flowers, and gay with transient gaiety. All the joy which these bustling and gorgeous groups displayed in their dress and bearing, Luigi and Ginevra kept buried in the depths of their hearts. On the one hand was the coarse tumult of pleasure; on the other

the delicate silence of joyful hearts: earth and heaven. But the tremulous Ginevra could not entirely lay aside the weakness of the woman. With the superstition of an Italian she saw a presage in this contrast and thus a feeling of terror, as unconquerable as her love, lurked in the bottom of her heart. All at once an official, dressed in the city livery, threw open a folding door; silence was called, and his voice rang out almost like a shriek as he summoned Monsieur Luigi da Porta and Mademoiselle Ginevra di Piombo. It was an embarrassing moment for the two lovers. The celebrity of the name Piombo attracted attention; the spectators looked about them expecting to see a sumptuous wedding-party. Ginevra rose, took Luigi's arm, and, followed by the witnesses, moved forward with a firm step, while her haughty air overawed the crowd. A murmur of surprise which gradually swelled, a general clatter of tongues, rose to remind Ginevra that the world would hold her to account for the absence of her parents. It seemed that she was pursued by her father's malediction.

"Wait for the respective families," said the mayor to the clerk, who was hastily reading the documents.

"The father and mother protest," replied the secretary phlegmatically.

"What, on both sides?" pursued the mayor.

"The husband is an orphan."

"Where are the witnesses?"

"Here," said the secretary, pointing to the four men, who, mute and motionless and with folded arms, resembled four statues.

"But if there is a protest?" said the mayor.

"The forms of respect have been complied with according to law," replied the clerk rising to hand over to the mayor the documents annexed to the marriage contract.

There was something dishonouring in this bureaucratic colloquy, which, in a very few words, summed up a complete history. The mutual hate of the Portas and Piombos, terrific passions were thus inscribed upon the pages of a public register as the annals of a nation are engraved up-

on a tombstone in a few lines, often indeed in a single word :—Robespierre, Napoleon. Ginevra shuddered. As the dove in its flight across the waters found no rest but the ark for the soul of her foot, so Ginevra could find no refuge for her eyes save the eyes of Luigi; for all around her was cold and sad. The mayor's look was stern and reproachful, while his clerk examined the two lovers with malevolent curiosity. Nothing could less resemble a fête. Like every other circumstance of life when stripped of its accessories, the situation was simple in itself, but vast and complicated to the eye of thought. After sundry interrogations to which the pair replied, after some words had been muttered by the mayor, and the signatures placed upon the register, Luigi and Ginevra were united. Then the young Corsicans, whose union presented all the romance which genius has consecrated in Romeo and Juliet, passed between two hedges of gay relatives who had no connexion with them, and were almost angry at the delay occasioned by that melancholy marriage. When the young girl found herself in the

court of the mairie, under the open sky, a sigh escaped from her bosom.

"Oh, will a whole life of love and tender care suffice to repay the courage and affection of my Ginevra?" said Luigi.

These words, accompanied by tears of happiness, banished all remembrance of suffering from Ginevra's mind, for she *had* suffered by appearing in the face of the world to claim that happiness which her family refused to sanction.

"Why should people interfere with you and me?" she asked, with a simplicity of feeling which enchanted Luigi.

Pleasure lightened the hearts of the husband and wife. They saw neither earth nor sky, nor houses, but flew as with wings towards the church. At length they reached a small and obscure chapel, and before a simple altar an old priest celebrated their union. There, as at the mairie, they were surrounded by two weddings, which persecuted them with their display. The church, crammed with friends and relations, echoed with the noise produced by the carriages, the vergers, the beadles, and the priests. Altars

blazed in full ecclesiastic pomp, fresh-looking wreaths of orange flowers adorned the statues of the Virgin. Everywhere were flowers, incense, sparkling lights, and velvet cushions trimmed with gold. God himself seemed to be a party to this pleasure of a day. At that stage of the ceremony, when that symbol of eternal union, that yoke of white satin which is so soft, so brilliant, and so light for some, so leaden to the greater number, should have been held above the heads of Luigi and Ginevra, the priest looked round in vain for the youths who generally perform the glad office. Two of the witnesses supplied their place. The clergyman delivered a hurried address to the young couple, about the perils of life and the duties which they should some day impress on the minds of their children; and while dwelling on the topic he insinuated a reproach about the absence of Ginevra's parents. Then, having set the lovers in the presence of God, as the mayor had set them in the presence of the law, he finished the mass and left them.

"God bless them," said Vergniaud to the mason when they reached the church

porch. "Never were two creatures better fitted for one another. The parents of this girl are dotards. I know no braver soldier than Colonel Louis. If every one had behaved as he did, *the other* would be still upon the throne."

The soldier's benediction, the only one which they had received that day, shed balm upon Ginevra's heart.

They separated with a hearty shake of the hand, and Luigi thanked his landlord cordially.

"Good-bye, my brave comrade," said Luigi to the quarter-master, "I thank you."

"Entirely at your service, colonel; heart and body, horses and carriages, all I have is at your service."

"How he loves you," said Ginevra.

Luigi lost no time in taking his bride to the house which they were to inhabit. They soon reached their modest apartments, and there, when the door was closed behind them, Luigi took his wife in his arms, and exclaimed, "My Ginevra, for now you are mine; here is the real festivity; here all will wear smiles for us."

Together they went through the three

rooms which composed their home. The anteroom was dining-room and drawing-room in one. On the right was a bedroom, and on the left a large study, which Luigi had arranged for the use of his dear wife. It contained easels, colour-boxes, casts, models, mannikins, in short all the implements of an artist.

"That is where I shall work then," said Ginevra, with an expression of childlike simplicity. She gazed for a long time at the hangings and the furniture, turning from time to time to Luigi to thank him; for there was a kind of magnificence in this little retreat. There was a book-case containing Ginevra's favourite books, and at the bottom of the room there was a piano.

Ginevra sat down upon a sofa, drew Luigi to her, and squeezing his hand, said in a caressing tone, "You have good taste."

"Your words make me very happy," said he.

"But let us look at everything," said Ginevra, from whom Luigi had concealed the ornamental preparations he had introduced into their retreat.

Then they went into the nuptial chamber, fresh and white like a virgin.

"Don't let us stay here," said Luigi, laughing.

"Oh, but I must see everything!" and the imperious Ginevra looked at every article of furniture with the inquisitive attention of an antiquary examining a medal. She felt the silks and scrutinized everything with the artless contentment of a young bride spreading out the riches of her trousseau.

"We are ruining ourselves at starting," she said, half gladly, half sorrowfully.

"That is true; all the arrears of my pay are here," replied Luigi; "I sold them to a good fellow named Gigonnet."

"Why?" inquired Ginevra, in a reproachful tone, which betrayed a secret satisfaction. "Do you think I should be less happy in an attic? But all this is very pretty and it is ours," she resumed.

Luigi gazed at her so enthusiastically that she looked down and said to him,—

"Let us go and see the rest."

In the attics above these three rooms there was a study for Luigi, a kitchen, a

servant's room. Ginevra was quite satisfied with her little domain, though the only view it commanded was the large blank wall of a neighbouring house, and the court which lighted it was sombre. The hearts of the two lovers were so glad, hope made the future so bright for them, that they could see none but enchanting images in their mysterious asylum. They were buried in that vast house, and lost in the wilderness of Paris, like two pearls in their bed of shell in the bosom of the deep, deep ocean. To others such a dwelling would have been a prison, to them it was a paradise.

The first days of their union were given up to love. It was more than they could do to set themselves to work at once; they could not resist the enchantment of their passion.

Luigi would lie for hours together at the feet of his bride, adoring the colour of her hair, the shape of her forehead, the exquisite casing of the eyes, the purity and whiteness of the arches beneath which they gently rolled, sweetly expressing the happiness of contented love.

Ginevra would play with the hair of her Luigi, and never tire of contemplating "la beltà folgorante," to use her own expression, of the young man, and the elegance of his features. She was enchanted with the nobleness of his manners; he with the grace of hers. Like children, they toyed with trifles; those trifles always carried them back to their love; and they only abandoned their gambols to fall back into the reverie of the *far niente*. An air sung by Ginevra brought before them again the delightful gradations of their love. Then uniting their steps, as they had united their hearts, they wandered through the fields, and still found their love in all things—in the flowers, in the sky, and in the burning colours of the setting sun. They read it even in the capricious clouds which encountered in mid air. One day was never like another; as time flowed on their love increased in strength because it was true love. They had tested each other in a few days, and had instinctively recognized that their hearts belonged to that class whose inexhaustible wealth seems to give promise

of new joys in the future. Theirs was love in all its simplicity, with its interminable chit-chat, its half-finished phrases, its long silences, its fierce outbursts, its oriental rest. Luigi and Ginevra had learned love in all its vast variety; for love is vast and various like the ocean, which viewed superficially or in haste, is accused of monotony by vulgar minds; while certain privileged beings might spend a whole lifetime in admiring it, and ceaselessly discover in it changing phenomena to enchant them.

The day, however, arrived when prudence intruded, to drag the young couple from their Eden. They found that they must work in order to live. Ginevra, who possessed a peculiar talent for imitating old pictures, set to work to produce copies, and acquired a connexion among the picture-dealers. Luigi on his part was active in trying to obtain employment; but it was very difficult for a young officer, whose only acquirements were a thorough knowledge of military manœuvres, to find anything to do in Paris.

At last, one day, when weary of his fruit-

less exertions, and desperate at heart at finding that the burthen of their existence fell entirely upon Ginevra, he bethought him to try and turn his penmanship, which was very good, to some account. With that perseverance of which his wife had set him an example, he went to the attorneys, the notaries, and the advocates of Paris to ask them for work. The frankness of his bearing, and the position in which he was placed, told greatly in his favour, and he obtained so many commissions, that he was obliged to get some young men to help him. Gradually he set up a wholesale copying business, the profits of which, together with the amount produced by Ginevra's pictures, set the young couple at their ease—an ease which made them proud, as being the result of their own industry. That was the brightest period of their life.

Occupation and the joys of love made the days pass rapidly In the evening, after a good day's work, they came together joyfully in Ginevra's sanctum. Music indemnified them for their toils. The features of the young wife were never clouded with

melancholy; never did she allow herself to utter a complaint. She always managed to appear in the presence of her husband with a smile upon her lips and with beaming eyes. Both of them nurtured a dominant idea which would have enabled them to find pleasure in the rudest toils; Ginevra would tell herself that she was working for Luigi, and Luigi would tell himself that he was working for Ginevra. It would indeed occasionally happen that the young wife, during her husband's absence, would think of the perfect happiness which she would have enjoyed, if that life of love had been passed in the presence of her father and mother. At such times she would fall into the deepest dejection, under the potent influence of remorse; sombre pictures would pass, like shadows, before her imagination; she would see her old father in his solitude, or her mother weeping in the evening and hiding her tears from the inexorable Piombo; those two white and serious heads would suddenly rise before her, and it seemed to her that she would never see them more, save by the fantastic light of memory. That idea haunted her like a

presentiment. She celebrated the anniver- of their marriage by giving her husband a portrait, which he had often wanted—the portrait of his Ginevra. Never had the young artist composed anything so remark- able. Setting aside the perfection of the likeness, her striking beauty, the purity of her feelings, and the happiness of love were there almost magically depicted. The master-piece was inaugurated. And then they passed another year in the lap of affluence. The story of their lives might be written in three words, "they were happy." No event happened to them of sufficient importance to be noticed.

In the early part of the winter of the year 1819 the picture-dealers advised Ginevra to produce something else than copies, since competition prevented them from being sold to advantage. Madame Porta then saw that she had made a mistake in not practising the painting of pictures of genre, by which she might have made a name. She now took to painting portraits; but she had to contend against a crowd of artists poorer even than her- self. However, inasmuch as Luigi and

Ginevra had laid by some money, they did not despair of the future. At the end of the winter of that same year Luigi worked incessantly. He also had to contend against competition; the price paid for engrossing had fallen so much that he could no longer employ any assistants, and found himself obliged to work harder for the same amount of money. His wife had produced several pictures of considerable merit; but the dealers would hardly buy the paintings even of renowned artists. Ginevra offered them for the merest trifles, yet could not sell them.

The situation of the young couple was somewhat appalling; their hearts, it is true, were bathed in happiness; love showered its treasures upon them; but poverty raised its skeleton head in the midst of this harvest of pleasure, and they concealed their anxieties from one another.

When Ginevra felt ready to burst into tears at the sight of Luigi's sufferings, she heaped caresses on him; and Luigi also, while black sorrow nestled at his heart, exhibited to Ginevra the tenderest affection. They sought compensation for their

sufferings in the exaltation of their sentiments and their words, their joys, and their amusements were tinged with a kind of phrenzy. They dreaded the future. What feeling is there which can be compared in strength to a passion which must cease to-morrow under the cold hand of death or want? When they talked about their penury, they felt impelled to deceive each other, and were equally eager to grasp even the slenderest hope.

One night Ginevra, after feeling about in vain, missed Luigi from her side. A faint light reflected upon the dark wall of the little court led her to the conclusion that her husband had begun to work at night. (In fact, Luigi waited till his wife was asleep, and then went upstairs to his study.) Four o'clock struck; Ginevra lay down again and pretended to be asleep. Luigi returned sleepy and overcome with fatigue, and Ginevra gazed upon the beautiful face and saw that toil and care had already imprinted upon it some wrinkles.

"It is on my account that he spends his nights writing," she said tearfully. But a thought occurred to her which dried

her tears. She resolved to imitate Luigi. That very day she went to a rich dealer in engravings, and owing to a letter of introduction given to her by Elie Magus, one of the dealers who bought her pictures, she obtained an order for colouring engravings. In the daytime she painted, and looked to the affairs of the household: then, when night came, she coloured engravings. So that these two beings who loved each other so dearly, only entered the nuptial bed in order to quit it. Both pretended to be asleep, and so, from sheer devotion, deceived each other. One night Luigi, succumbing to the kind of fever set up by the toil which was beginning to be too much for him, opened the window of his study to breathe the pure morning air and relieve his pain; when, looking down, he perceived the light thrown upon the wall by Ginevra's lamp. The unhappy man guessed everything, went downstairs, and treading softly, caught his wife in the middle of her studio, colouring engravings.

"Oh, Ginevra," he cried.

She started convulsively upon her seat, and blushed.

"How could I sleep while you were exhausting yourself with fatigue?" said she.

"Yes, but I only have the right to work like this."

"Can I remain idle," replied the young wife, as her eyes filled with tears, "when I know that every morsel of bread I eat costs us perhaps a drop of your blood? I should die if I did not unite my efforts to yours. Ought not all things to be in common between us, pleasure as well as pain?"

"She is cold," cried Luigi in despair, "fasten your shawl more over your breast, my Ginevra; the night is cold and damp."

They placed themselves before the window, the young wife rested her head upon the bosom of her beloved, who held her by the waist, and thus the two looked up in profound silence at the sky, which was slowly brightening with the coming day. Grey clouds sped lightly by, one after the other, and the east grew lighter and lighter.

"Look," said Ginevra, "it is a presage; we shall be happy."

"Yes, in heaven," replied Luigi, with a bitter smile. "O Ginevra, you who deserved all the treasures of the earth—"

"I have your heart," she said joyously.

"Ah, I do not complain," resumed Luigi, straining her tightly to his heart, and covering with kisses the delicate face which was beginning to lose the freshness of youth, but whose expression was so sweet and gentle that he could never look at it without feeling consoled.

"How silent it is," said Ginevra. "My friend, I find a great pleasure in sitting up. The majesty of the night is truly contagious; it awes and it inspires; there is an indescribable potency in the thought 'everything slumbers, and I am awake.'"

"O my Ginevra, not to-day for the first time have I discovered the delicate grace of your heart. But see, the sun is rising. Come and sleep."

"I will," she said, "but not alone. I suffered much on the night when I discovered that my Luigi sat up without me."

The courage with which these two young

people fought against misfortune was, for a time, not without its reward: but that event which is generally considered the crowning felicity of married life was doomed to be fatal to them. Ginevra had a son, who, to borrow a popular expression, was as "lovely as the day." The maternal feeling doubles the strength of a young woman. Luigi borrowed money in order to provide for the expenses of Ginevra's confinement. Just at first, therefore, she did not experience all the uneasiness of her situation, and the husband and wife gave themselves up to the delights of rearing a child. It was their last pleasure. At first the two Corsicans, like two swimmers uniting their efforts to swim against a stream, struggled bravely; but at times they gave way to an apathy resembling those fits of sleep which are the harbingers of death. They soon found themselves compelled to sell their jewels. Poverty suddenly showed herself, not hideous, but simply clad, and almost easy to be borne. There was nothing fearful in her voice; she did not bring in her train despair, and rags, and spectres; but she

did banish the recollection and destroy the habits of affluence; she wore the springs of pride. Then came want in all its horrors, want, reckless of its tatters, want that treads under foot every human feeling.

Seven or eight months after the birth of little Bartholoméo, it would have been difficult to recognize in the mother who was suckling that sickly child, the original of the admirable portrait which was now the only ornament of the bare room. Without fire during that severe winter, Ginevra saw the graceful outlines of her face slowly disappearing; her cheeks grew white as porcelain, her eyes paled as if the sources of life were drying up within her. Seeing her child thin and discoloured, Ginevra suffered only from its infant misery, while Luigi had not even courage enough to smile at his boy.

"I have been all over Paris," said he, in a hollow voice. "I know no one, and how can I beg from strangers? Vergniaud the grazier, my old Egyptian comrade, is implicated in a conspiracy; he has been thrown into prison, and besides, he has

already lent me all he could spare. As for our landlord, he has not asked for any rent for a year."

"But we are not in want of anything," replied Ginevra gently, with assumed calmness.

"Every day that comes round brings some fresh difficulty," pursued Luigi with terror. Luigi took all Ginevra's pictures, the portrait, several pieces of furniture with which the household could still dispense, and sold the whole lot for the merest trifle. The sum which he obtained for it prolonged for a brief period the death-struggles of the household.

In these days of misfortune, Ginevra displayed the sublimity of her character, and the extent of her resignation; she supported the attacks of sorrow with stoicism. Her energetic mind sustained her against every evil, she worked with an unfailing hand by the side of her dying boy, performed the duties of the household with miraculous activity, and was equal to every emergency. She was happy, even now, when she saw upon Luigi's lips a smile of astonishment at the sight of the

neatness which pervaded the one room in which they had taken refuge.

"My friend, I have kept a bit of bread for you," said Ginevra one night when he came back, worn out with fatigue.

"And you?"

"I have dined, dear Luigi, I don't want anything."

And the sweet expression of her face invited him more than her words did, to accept the nourishment of which she was robbing herself. Luigi gave her one of those despairing kisses which in 1793 friends used to give one another as they mounted the scaffold together. At such critical moments the hearts of two beings are entirely laid bare to each other. Accordingly the miserable Luigi, understanding at once that his wife was fasting, caught the excitement which was devouring her, shuddered, and, under the pretence of having some pressing piece of business on hand, went out; for he would rather have taken the most subtle poison than escape death by eating the last morsel of bread to be found at home. He went forth and walked about

Paris among the most brilliant carriages, in the midst of that insolent luxury which everywhere stares one in the face. He passed quickly by the shops of the money-changers with their piles of glittering gold; and at length determined to sell himself, to offer himself as a substitute for military service, hoping that that sacrifice would save Ginevra, and that during his absence she might be restored to the good graces of Bartholoméo. He therefore went to find one of those men who carry on the white slave-trade, and experienced a certain kind of pleasure in recognizing in him a foreign officer of the imperial guard.

"I have eaten nothing for two days," he said, in a slow and feeble voice. "My wife is dying of hunger, and does not utter a single complaint; she would smile in dying, I believe. I entreat you, comrade," he added with a bitter laugh, "to buy me in advance; I am strong, I am no longer in the service, and I . . . ."

The officer gave Luigi a sum on account of that which he undertook to procure for him. The wretched man gave vent to a convulsive laugh when he grasped a

handful of gold. He ran with all his might towards his house, panting, and at times exclaiming, "O my Ginevra, Ginevra." Night was falling when he reached home. He entered quite quietly, fearing to cause too much excitement to his wife, whom he had left in a feeble state. The last rays of the setting sun penetrating the window were shedding their dying light upon the face of Ginevra, who was sitting in a chair asleep, holding her child to her bosom.

"Awake, my soul," said he, not noticing the posture of the child, who at that moment looked unnaturally bright.

Hearing that voice, the poor mother opened her eyes, encountered Luigi's look, and smiled; but Luigi uttered a cry of terror. He hardly recognized his half-mad wife, but with a gesture of savage energy showed her the gold. Ginevra began to laugh mechanically, and all at once cried in a fearful voice, "Louis, the child is cold." She looked at her boy and fainted; the little Bartholoméo was dead. Luigi raised his wife in his arms, and, without taking the child, which she was clasping with

incomprehensible strength, from her arms, laid her on the bed; then he went out and called for help.

"O my God," said he to the landlord, whom he met upon the staircase, "I have gold, and my child is famished to death. My wife is dying—help us."

He returned in a desperate condition to his wife, and left the honest mason and several of the neighbours, to collect all that was needful to succour a misery till then unknown to them, so carefully had the two Corsicans, actuated by a feeling of pride, concealed it. Luigi had thrown his gold upon the floor, and was kneeling at the foot of the bed on which his wife was lying.

"Father, take care of my child, which bears your name," cried Ginevra in her delirium.

"O my angel, calm yourself," said Luigi, embracing her. "There are happy days in store for us."

That voice, and that embrace somewhat tranquillized her.

"O my Louis," she resumed, looking at him with close attention, "listen well to

what I am going to say. I feel that I am dying; my death was to be expected; I suffered too much; and then a happiness like mine must be paid for. Yes, my Louis, console yourself, I have been so happy that if I were to begin life again I would accept our destiny. Ah! I am a bad mother, I regret you more than I regret my child. My child!" she added in deeper tone; her tears fell from her dying eyes, and she suddenly pressed the corpse which she had not been able to revive.

"Give my hair to my father in remembrance of his Ginevra. Tell him that I never accused him." Her head sank upon her husband's arm.

"No, you cannot die," cried Luigi; "the doctor is coming; we have bread. Your father will restore you to his favour. Prosperity has dawned for us. Remain with us, angel of beauty."

But the fond and loving heart was growing cold. Ginevra instinctively turned her eyes towards him whom she adored, although she was now no longer conscious of anything. Confused images flitted before her mind, which was just

losing all recollection of earth. She knew that Luigi was there, for she clasped his icy hand, even more and more tightly still; it seemed as if she were trying to cling to a precipice over which she felt herself falling.

"My friend," she said at last, "you are cold: I will warm you."

She would have placed her husband's hand upon her heart, but she died. Two doctors, a priest, and some neighbours came in at that moment, bringing all that was needed to succour the husband and wife, and assuage their despair. These strangers created a good deal of noise at first, but when they had entered, a fearful silence reigned throughout the room.

While this scene was taking place, Bartholoméo and his wife were seated in their old-fashioned arm-chairs, one on either side of the vast fireplace, whose blazing coals warmed the immense drawing-room of their hotel. The timepiece marked the hour of midnight. For a long time past the old couple had grown wakeful. At that moment they were silent, like two

old people fallen into second childhood, who see all, yet notice nothing. The deserted room, so full of memories for them, was dimly lighted by a single lamp whose flame was almost extinct. But for the flickering flame of the hearth, they would have been in complete darkness. One of their friends had just left them, and the chair upon which he had sat during his visit stood between the two Corsicans. Piombo had already more than once looked at that chair—and these looks, pregnant with ideas, followed each other like so many twinges of remorse; for the empty chair was Ginevra's. Elisa Piombo was watching the expressions which chased each other across the pale features of her husband. Although she was accustomed to guess his feelings, from the changing revolutions in his face, these were by turns so menacing and so melancholy, that she could not read that incomprehensible mind.

Was Bartholoméo giving way under the potent memories aroused by that chair? Was he shocked to see that, for the first time since his daughter's departure,

it had been used by a stranger? Had the hour of his clemency, that hour so vainly looked for until then, struck at last?

Such were the reflections which succeeded each other in the mind of Elisa Piombo. For a moment her husband's face assumed so terrible an aspect, that she trembled at having employed so simple an expedient to give rise to an opportunity of speaking of Ginevra. At that moment the north-east wind drove the snow-flakes so violently against the shutters, that the two old people could hear the light sound. Ginevra's mother bowed her head, in order to conceal her tears from her husband. All at once a sigh issued from the old man's breast, his wife looked at him, and he broke down; she ventured for the second time during three years to speak to him of his daughter.

"If Ginevra should be cold," she said gently. Piombo shuddered. "She is hungry perhaps," continued the old woman. The Corsican let fall a tear. "She has a child and cannot suckle it, her milk has dried up," continued the mother rapidly, in the accents of despair.

"Let her come! let her come!" cried Piombo. "Oh, my darling child! you have conquered me."

The mother rose as if to go and seek her child. At that moment the door flew noisily open, and a man whose face had nothing human in it stood suddenly before them.

"*Dead!* Our two families were fated to exterminate each other, for that is all that remains of her," said he, laying Ginevra's long black hair upon the table.

The two old people shuddered as if they had felt a thunderstroke, and lost sight of Luigi.

"He spares us a gun-shot, for he is dead!" said Bartholoméo slowly, looking on the ground.

END OF VOL. I.

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